



Piping Times

Vol. 6, No. 6

MARCH, 1954.



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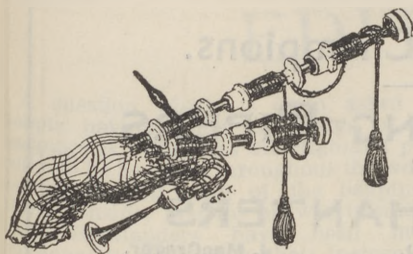
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Piping Times

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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Editorial	5
Piobaireachd	6 and 7
Review of College of Piping Tutor (Part I)	8 and 9
Piping Competitions in Ireland	10 and 11
Piper's Diary	12
Journal of a Tour	13 and 14
Toronto Indoor Games	15
London Notes	17
Letters to the Editor	18, 19, 20 and 21

COVER PICTURE :

Breaking in "Carltons" in Brittany—Robert MacGregor shows his drumming skill to amaze the locals during the College tour of Brittany, 1953. The Piper is Iain Thomson.

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EDITORIAL

A question which is often asked by people having some knowledge of the bagpipes is "Why has the Highland pipe come to be accepted throughout the world as the leading form of the bagpipe?" Many consider that the answer is simply that Highlanders have been more passionately addicted to their instrument than have other nations, but this is not, of course, the whole story. Practically every country in Europe has its own bagpipes, some having two or three forms from which to choose, and although these other types of instruments are still played, almost everybody in the world associates piping with Scotland, and in particular, with the Highlands of Scotland.

A great deal of the credit for this fact undoubtedly belongs to the MacCrimmons and their predecessors and contemporaries who invented and developed "ceol mor". No other bagpipe has had such a high standard of music composed for it as the classical music developed in Gaelic Scotland. Musicians from other countries continue to be astounded at the excellence of our "piobaireachd," and there is no doubt that the fact that our pipes could and can produce music equal in standard to that played by any other instrument has had a great effect on the popularity of the piob mor.

A second reason for its pre-eminence is undoubtedly to be found in the actual scale of the chanter. The method used by our ancestors to divide the octave was quite different from that employed and made popular in the rest of Europe—as might well be expected when one considers how isolated was our country, especially from the rest of the world of music, until comparatively recently in history. Working presumably on a system of trial and error, and with only their innate sense of musical beauty as a guide, the Highlanders developed a division of the octave into eight steps, which is not the "Just" scale, but is in fact the only other possible scale which is equally musical. It is in effect the "Highland pipe scale," and, since no tempering of it is required as in the case of other instruments such as the piano, it gives the bagpipe at least equality in a musical sense with all other instruments.

The third and most important reason for the predominance of the great pipe is the fact that the Highlander does not compromise. He may break, but he does not bend. Other instruments may produce soft, sweet music, may run the gamut of several octaves and may have effective silences at will, but the instrument that sounds in the glens and straths, in the castle and in the croft, depends on the beauty of great simplicity, on the steady flow of music which is as natural as a river, and on the volume in proportion to the natural features of the land of the people whose sorrow and joy it expresses.

Many other forms of the pipe have tried to compete with indoor instruments, with the soft tootling and tinkling of music that fears the wet, and in the comparisons the emasculated pipe has always been rejected. Extending the range does not enlarge the beauty, nor does softening the note increase the effect. The Highlander reckoned it was better to live or die in the open, rather than contract a lingering disease in an overcrowded salon.

But our scale and our music have been and still are our guarantee against decline, provided always we remain as unbending as our ancestors. The great tributes which are paid to our pipe today are not those of musicians "discovering" the value of our music, or of scientists coldly deciding that our scale is musically equal to any that they themselves had previously devised. The greatest tributes lie in the fact that the Irish, the Bretons, the Indians and the English have adopted our form of the instrument in preference to their own.

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PIOBAIREACHD

By FRANCIS GEORGE SCOTT

This is the third and last article in the present series by the world-famous Scottish composer.

As it is quite likely that only serious students of music ever learn to appreciate how important scales and other technical matters are, in determining the salient characteristics of different kinds of music, I now pass to another aspect of our subject—the difference between Celtic Art and the Art of Europe in general. Roger Binks, in his book on Carolingian Arts, says:—"At about the same time as Greek art was taking shape in the Mediterranean area (8th to 7th century B.C.), two other cultures were engaged in forming a distinctive style: the Scythians to the north-east and the Celts to the north-west." Of the essential difference between the Nordic and Mediterranean attitude, he writes, "This is nothing less than the distinction between monumental and non-monumental art. The Greek conception of form was monumental, but in Celtic art these monumental forms do not exist. In the first (i.e., the Greek), the tendency is to stick simple elements together until they form a complete unit, and, in the second (the Celtic) the tendency is for the unit to evolve like a cellular structure.

With the Greeks, therefore, the movement is from the border inwards towards the centre and with the Celts it is from the central nucleus outwards towards the limits of the area decorated. He describes the Greek kind of structure as 'clear, calm and static,' and the Celtic as "involved, restless and dynamic." (This quotation is about painting and sculpture, but is applicable to music).

Another book, "Christian Art in Ancient Ireland," published a year or two ago by the Government of the Irish Free State, also deals with fundamental differences between Celtic art and so-called classical art. "In classical art, the pattern and the ground are sharply differentiated, and the pattern is felt to lie on top of the ground. In Celtic ornament, on the other hand, it is impossible to say which is ground and which is pattern. From the classical point of view, therefore, Celtic art is barbaric; it is a peasant art; Oriental rather than Occidental — the

patterning of the Oriental carpet or the Moorish arabesque. So perhaps we have here something common to both Celt and Oriental—the involution of mind and the intricacy of pattern, the mysticism and symbolism. Except for the Celtic and the weak streak of Byzantine, this art of abstract forms has never taken root in Eastern Europe."

All this, of course, refers to visual patterns, but every word and implication of it, can be applied to the sound patterns of the Gaelic music we have been discussing. In Gaelic music, too, the form is built up organically from a nucleus, or "unit of repeat," the tension at the centre as in a growing plant, ever pushing outwards. These repeat patterns whether they be of pitch or of rhythm, are generally of quite brief duration, and are arranged in the most subtle way to build up a musical shape that seems in the act of growing while we listen to it. Even a simple Gaelic folksong built on a 5 or 6 formula can have so much of the "involved, restless, dynamic tension" in it, that one can feel it as something living in every one of its parts.

The Variations.

One of the earliest and therefore easiest ways of changing and developing a simple tune is by varying it, and this variation form reached a remarkably advanced stage before any of the other forms of musical art had passed the period of incubation. It will be readily understood that such changes affected both the melodic line and the rhythm. It was indeed a common practice, especially in instrumental music to write out a familiar tune in long notes (indicating a slow pace) and in this way make it easier for different rhythmic patterns to be added to it. This procedure was applied to church plainsong and also to folksong. It must not be thought that the practice of varying a theme is something that belongs only to the earliest centuries of European music. The principle underlying theme and variation, runs through the whole history of the art of music—



Asiatic as well as European, and with good reason, since it provides what is fundamental in all art—namely, a diversity which is at the same time a unity.

By a cadence in music is meant the falling (or rising) of the melody at the end of a rhythmic unit or phrase, to one of the fundamental notes of the scale—the tonic or dominant in most cases. In the urlar of pibroch, we find what is called a cadence at the beginning of phrases—a group of three notes (G' E D), which seem to hold up the progress of the melody—the general practice being to sustain the E note (the dominant of the drone). It should be obvious to every hearer that this interrupts the natural melodic flow by cutting the music into lengths and destroying the unity of it. I sometimes feel inclined to ask pipers to banish these cadence points altogether until some justification for their use can be established.

As the music of the pipes is continuous, it is sometimes difficult for the unaccustomed hearer to follow the theme throughout, or to realise when a new variation of it is in progress. What everyone will realise, however, is the growing urgency and complexity of what is being unfolded—"The ceaseless movement (I mentioned already) from the nucleus outwards, towards the limits of area decorated."

One final word of explanation. The music, like all purely melodic music of the pre-harmonic period is "unmeasured" and gives the hearer no sense of regular pulse. This is often the case in the urlar; as each variation leads to another more complex, the tempo may seem to increase without actually doing so.

The Highland composer undoubtedly has a method of composition which is his very own. There is some kind of leger-demain or jugglery about it which it is difficult to pin down and put a name to. If I say to him "That is 1 2 3," he may reply, "Yes—but it can also be 3 2 1, or 213, or 312, or 1 3 2, or 2 3 1, or in fact a whole lot of different things." If I sing "s-s,l,d'r—||" he replies t||l,d,l,—||s,—||. If I sing m-n:mrm||s, he replies l-s:mr||d—to r.ms-m||r-d:r he replies t||l,d,l,—||s,—||.

In other words he has a genius for the manipulation of any series of notes by reversing the order of them. In "The Blind Piper's Obstinacy" his 1st line has 6 bars which read ||ABC||ACB||. His 2nd line is ||CAB||ACB||, and his 3rd line is CADB, viz. 4 bars with a new bar D.

An appreciation of piobaireachd can be helped by listening to the way that the

composer has varied the order in which phrases of music are presented so as to produce the finished ground. The following are three examples:—

The Blind Piper's Obstinacy—

- 1st line, the bars are ABCACB viz. 6.
- 2nd line, the bars are CABACB, viz. 6.
- 3rd line, the bars are CADB, viz. 4.

The Lament for the Children—

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
A B C D E F G H
Repeated 8 bars.
3 6 9 2 10 11 12
C F I B J B K L

=8 bars.

5 6 7 8 13 14 3 4
E F G H M N C D
=8 bars.

A total of 32 bars.

The Lament for Colin Roy MacKenzie—

1 2 3 4 5 6
A B C D E F
=6 bars.

7 8 3 9 8 2 10 11 12 9
H I C J I B K L M J
=10 bars.

13 14 15 16 17 18 19 9
N O P Q R S T J
=8 bars.

A total of 24 bars.

For the persian mystic, Sufi, music, which he calls "the nourishment of the Soul," is the divine art which, on its invisible wing, takes up the soul and transports it into the invisible. It has five aspects:—

1. Tarab—which provokes bodily movement.
2. Ruga—which appeals to the intelligence.
3. Koul—which awakens feeling.
4. Nida—which accompanies visions of Paradise.
5. Saut—which attains the Absolute, is the benediction harmonizing the two worlds, and carries in itself the peace eternal.

And doesn't the Gael classify his music under very similar headings?

Ceol Beag—the little music—of the body and action—hence dancing, labour—lilts, etc.

Ceol Meadhonach—the middle music—of the emotions—personal—hence love songs and expressions of tenderness.

Ceol Mor—the Great Music—of the mind or intellect—impersonal—expressing contemplation and awe.

Review of the College of Piping Tutor (Part I)

By PIPE-MAJOR JOHN A. MacLELLAN, Seaforth Highlanders.

When I was on our recent delightful tour of Canada with Seumas MacNeill, he told me about the proposed Tutor which the College was to publish. I told him then that if they made a success of it, a heartfelt want in piping would be satisfied. I received a copy in February, and I find that, like all other tasks tackled by the College of Piping, it has been accomplished in a first class, workman-like manner.

A piper is usually naturally critical and suspicious of anything in piping which was not taught to him by his own teacher, so I perused the Tutor in great detail with a fault-finding eye. The conclusions that I draw on reaching the last page are that this is about the finest step forward in the history of piping. I am confident that one could pick up this book and a Practice Chanter and play the tunes at the end of the book well if all instructions are fully complied with and each lesson thoroughly studied.

There are, however, certain points throughout the Tutor which I will discuss, and I would like to think that by so doing, learning to play the bagpipe will be made an even easier task than at present, thanks to the College of Piping.

The diagrams I and II, I think, are misleading. The wrists appear too low and the fingers too straight. One must remember that when playing, both the bagpipe and the practice chanter the hands tend to slope downward. I would recommend that, in place of the diagram, an actual picture be used. The picture on Page 19 is an admirable example of the natural way of holding a chanter, and I think that it would be better if an enlargement of this particular picture were used. Again, in my opinion, it is a mis-statement to say that the closed "C" is not widely known outside the professional piping circle. Most of the pipers I know use the closed "C", and indeed nearly all the pipers who have passed through my hands have played the closed "C" before arriving in the Regiment. I do think that this is a good point to mention, as nothing sounds so bad as an open "C" because it is too flat, and I also think it tends to slovenly playing. The decision to use photographs of actual pipers' hands is indeed an excellent idea. This innovation is a

great help. To see the correct position of the hands for each note is one hundred per cent. instruction, and I would like to say to beginners, **copy this closely.** Those hands **do** belong to the cream of the piping world.

Lessons 1, 2, and 3 are very good, and the decision to break away from the conventional method of teaching the scale and gracenotes is to be thoroughly recommended to all piping instructors. However I think it is too early at this stage in the Tutor to introduce quavers and notes grouped together, as in the illustrations on pages 30 and 31. I would think that writing quavers so early would tend to confuse pupils who may well begin to wonder why notes are grouped together and have tails when they are only concerned in the meantime with plain notes and gracenotes.

At this stage I must disagree with the authors about the doubling on "D". It may well be, of course, that what I am about to say is only taught in the Army, although I think not. I have always understood a double "D" to be high "G" gracenote on the note "D", followed by an "E" gracenote on "D", and I further understand that the movement written in the Tutor called a double "D" to be a throw on "D". After all, a throw on "D" is a similar movement to a throw on "C" with only a very slight difference. Regarding the various ways of making this movement, I am not going to take sides as I myself play it in two ways. In Piobaireachd and Marches I play it as in the first method explained in the Tutor, and in Strathspeys, Reels and Jigs, I play the first of the second two methods explained, but I must recommend the learner to choose one method and stick to it until he is really proficient, which will be only after many years of practice.

The business of understanding written music as presented in the Tutor had me very much in two minds as to whether it should come before the actual learning of a tune. My instinct tells me that this should be so. However, I think the authors have done the correct thing in bringing it in later, as being able to play a tune without the tedious theory is a great incentive to more practice. Please do not misunderstand me when I say tedious theory—it only seems so when

one is a learner. The theoretical side of music is really as interesting as the playing. The understanding of the mechanics of written music as far as it affects the bagpipe for a learner are soundly explained in lesson 8, my only comment being that I think the key signature is totally unnecessary in bagpipe music. The scale is fixed, and therefore no key signature is required, a piper being unable, without false fingering, to make sharps and flats.

Now I come to the "High Road to Gareloch". Here an admirable opportunity has been missed to demonstrate what a throw on "D" looks like after low "G". I think this should be included in the notes below the first part of the tune, explaining that the first "G" of a normal throw on "D" is not written when after a low "G" note; it is in fact just a little more detail needed.

It was only when I reached "Highland Laddie" that I realised that, by this time, a learner should have been practising about twelve weeks. This point is a must for incorporation in page 13, emphasising that each lesson should take about a week to digest.

To my mind a little more explanation is required regarding compound time. For example, that when a group of notes is written (most especially when a group consists of a crotchet and a quaver) that "one two" is for the crotchet, and "three" for the quaver. I think it would be better if the pointing were left out in "Charles wi' the Breeks" and another lesson added explaining pointing which gives expression. This, I'm sure, would quite definitely illustrate compound time rhythm. To drive this business of time solidly home in both simple and compound time, I would recommend that the undermentioned be noted:—

1. The first part of a simple $2/4$ tune, two notes to a beat, should be plainly written without pointing.
2. The same part then pointed and explanations given to show how time is stolen from one note to another to make up the melody.
3. All gracenotes and doublings added to show how lively and interesting a tune then becomes.

I was quite amused by the word "Tachum". I don't think it is wise to describe the movement shown by this name. The technical name "cutting" would be better.

In lessons 24 and 25 the opportunity

should be taken to explain what I call split common time (or $2/2$ time). If this is not done, the pupil may beat four beats to the bar. It should be pointed out that the beat is a minim beat, normally written in two groups of notes, i.e. a crotchet and two quavers in the whole beat, and that there are only two beats to the bar.

In the writing of the Tutor, the only imperfections I note are that on page 65 where it says that to make a high double "D" (see my remarks on throw and double "Ds") play a "C" and "E" gracenote on "D". This should read high "G" and "E" gracenote on "D". In "Aiken Drum", in bar five, the second group is shown as three quavers instead of a quaver and two semi-quavers. On page 68 "Piobaireachd of Donald Dubh", fourth part, bar six, no "G" gracenote should be shown after high "A". I think it would be much easier for a learner to play a slur on "D" in bar five, third part, "Blue Bonnets", than the throw on "D" shown. Also the "C" gracenote on the slur on "D" shown in bar five of the third part and the first, fourth and fifth bars of the fourth part of the same tune are inconsistent with the College's teaching.

May I conclude with the hope that as this Tutor is marked Part I, another Part will be forthcoming in the near future. I am confident that the College of Piping will produce another work of the same standard, and I thoroughly recommend their methods to all instructors in the piping world.

* * * *

OIL FOR THE LAMPS OF CHINA!

All you pipers who are forever getting upset about the lack of broadcasting time allotted to piping on the B.B.C. programmes, can find consolation in the following gem of gen.

Be it known that the B.B.C.'s Far Eastern Service broadcasts large slices of culture to China in two languages. One of these transmissions was devoted to describing a trip round the National Gallery in London. But wait! This is not all; in addition, a vivid word picture of the work of cleaning and restoring an oil painting was given.

With all this uplifting stuff beamed on them, female Chinese listeners should be able to dispense with "bras."

You can see that your licence money is being put to the best possible use.

M. G. K.

PIPING COMPETITIONS IN IRELAND

By John MacFadyen

On Saturday, 27th February, the Irish Pipe Band Association held their annual solo piping competitions in the Fintan Lalor Band Hall, Dublin.

For me the business started on Friday night when I left home at 6.30 p.m. and was driven, complete with kilt, on a motor-cycle pillion to Renfrew airport. It was a windy evening.

After a very pleasant air trip, I arrived in Dublin around 9 p.m. and was met by Ignatius Lambert and Alex Meikle, Jr., who escorted me to the house of the former. There I met Pipe-Major and Mrs. Alex. Meikle and the irrepressible Mrs. Lambert (Toni). During the meal which followed, the conversation was, of course, on piping and pipers, and I was regaled with such stories as D.R. MacLennan's impressions of the Dublin traffic, Donald MacLeod's visit to Dublin, etc., etc. Piping selections were played by Alex. Meikle, Toni Lambert and myself, and, to round off the evening, Toni was persuaded to sing a Gaelic song. Her vocal effort was loudly applauded and was voted second only to D.R.'s rendering of the "Wedding of Larry MacGhee". I got to bed around 3 a.m. on Saturday morning.

On Saturday afternoon the two Junior Competitions took place and the results were as follows:—

Junior March—

- 1st J. Bradshaw—Fintan Lalor Pipe Band ("Mrs. MacDonald of Dunach").
- 2nd B. Garland—Fintan Lalor Pipe Band ("Corn in the Stack").
- 3rd W. Hennesay—Clonmel Boys' Club ("Burning of the Piper's Hut").

Intermediate March, Strathspey and Reel—

- 1st, P. Solan, Junr.

The three major faults which all the players had were: very bad instruments which prevented even the best performance from being a musical one; crossing noises which made the performances ragged, and the insistence of the competitors on playing tunes which were far too difficult for them.

On the credit side, however, they have tremendous enthusiasm and, a thing that surprised me very much, an amazing scarcity of false notes. If only a first

class piper and teacher was resident in Ireland and would conduct a class without having any ties with the pipe bands, I am sure that the standard of piping would increase by leaps and bounds.

This is no reflection on the integrity or enthusiasm of pipe-majors; they haven't got the time as their energies are geared to producing good pipe bands and not individual players, and band requirements must take precedence over individual requirements. When one considers this in addition to the great scarcity of really competent teachers, then the standard of piping shown in the competitions was a very high one. On Sunday afternoon, the Senior Individual Competitions were held in the Mansion House, and altogether some eight pipers competed.

First prize in this event went to Pipe-Major Tim Keogh, who played "Balmoral Highlanders", "Shepherd's Crook" and "Thomson's Dirk". With hard practice, less band work, and concentration on detail, this player could successfully compete at many of the games here, and his performance was first class and marred only by a few careless slips.

Second prize went to Alistair Black, who hails from Tiree. He played "The Conundrum", "Maggie Cameron", and "Major Manson". His march was good, but he fell away badly in his other two tunes, and I had a suspicion that he was suffering from cold fingers.

Third prize was awarded to Pipe-Major Thomas Moore of the James Connolly Pipe Band for his playing of "Highland Wedding", "Atholl Cummers" and "Over the Isles to America".

Toni's playing was spoilt by rushing the march in places and dragging the strathspey.

Of the other competitors, the best tune I heard was that of Liam Keogh, who played "Southall". While he had a lofty disdain for gracenotes, he put real feeling into the tune, and his march was, in many respects, the best tune I heard that day.

In the miniature band contest which followed, the results were as follows:—

- 1st, Fintan Lalor B.
- 2nd, Fintan Lalor A.
- 3rd Fintan Lalor C.

As you can see from the results, the Fintan Lalor Pipe Band was immeasurably better than any of their opponents, but I am sure that they could improve greatly if there was sterner opposition to be met in Ireland. This opposition may be forthcoming in the not too distant future, as some of the country bands are showing great improvement and have boundless enthusiasm for their task.

The Junior Miniature Contest was won by the Fintan Lalor Junior Pipe Band, and the Clonmel Boys' Club Pipe Band were second.

The drumming adjudicator was Mr. Jimmy Cairns—ex. Caber-Feidh Pipe Band.

A concert followed the competitions, and Pipe-Major Tom Moore gave a recital of the Irish pipe, after which we were entertained by an exhibition of Irish Folk Dancing. The concert concluded with the President of the Irish Pipe Band Association thanking the officials for their services and inviting Pipe-Major Tim Keogh to play the National Anthem on the pipe.

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PIPERS DIARY



By The Chiel

THE EIGHTH WONDER.

A most interesting letter received this month from L. Anderson of Mt. Isa, North Queensland, brought the details of the Australian Band Championships. Mr. Anderson also drew our attention to the fact that at the Radio Show held in London this past winter, a set of electronic bagpipes was one of the big attractions. It's a queer thing when news has to travel from London to Australia before it gets to Scotland. Maybe the English made sure that no hint of their dark deeds went northwards.

Details of the apparatus are hard to obtain, but we are reliably informed by an eye-witness that the scale had eleven notes. One would have thought the Sassenach would have reduced the range rather than augmented it.

FERRY SERVICE.

Arrangements are in progress for an interchange of young Scots and young Bretons during the approaching summer months. The scheme is that each will spend a holiday in the home of the other, each paying his own travelling expenses. Young pipers or dancers or drummers of either sex are especially welcomed by the Bretons, but anyone interested in Celtic culture may participate. Applications from Scots should be made as soon as possible to the College of Piping.

STANDS SCOTLAND ?

One Saturday morning recently we found ourselves listening for no apparent reason to "Children's Choice", a request record programme put out weekly by the B.B.C. The announcer obtained our whole attention when he said that he had received a great many requests for bagpipe music, and he would now put on "The Road to the Isles" for the following children. Then he read an impressive list of youngsters with addresses in York, Nottingham, Cardiff, North London, West Riding, Birmingham and points South. Later in the programme he announced something for Scottish children in Glasgow, Kirkintilloch, Perth, Roxburgh

and Dumbarton, and their request was—no not a modern jive-band. Our kids are maybe not piobaireachd enthusiasts, but at least we could approve their choice. They all asked for the Voice of Scotland, Robert Wilson himself.

It is probably not widely known, but Robert Wilson is a keen piping enthusiast and is a very strong supporter-member of the College of Piping.

PIPING IN THE PULPIT.

Piping gets people into queer places at times, and another to the long list was provided recently at Tollcross Victoria Church, Glasgow. The Rev. Mr. Lees is a keen musician, and as part of his pastoral activities he sponsors recitals of good music. Inevitably piping came to be included, and hence the heading to this paragraph.

It's a far cry from the days when the bagpipe was looked on—but don't let's drag it all up again.

HOLD FAST.

More and more new publications keep coming out for pipers and drummers, and word of two more due out this year has reached us. First is a collection of pipe music by Pipe-Major Donald MacLeod, which is being published for Donald by Mozart Allan. From what we hear of it, this should be a first-class book, as it has many new tunes and some modern arrangements of some of the classics.

MA AND PA.

The second publication, not due out until about September, is also being looked after by Mozart Allan. This is "a new drum tutor for pipe band music," and has been prepared by the maestro himself—Drum-Major John Seton. It is an exposition of the art of drumming from the beginning, and produced by such an authority (assisted by his son Jack Seton), it is assured of an immediate success. The foreword has been written by Brigadier Lorne MacLaine Campbell, V.C., D.S.O., T.D.

We have decided to have a bash at learning the drum next September.

Journal of a Tour.

By Seumas MacNeill.

One of the main events of our stay in Vancouver was the dinner held in our honour and attended by all the piping fraternity, and I mean fraternity, for this was strictly a stag show. Ed Esson was the superb master of ceremonies, and the chief guests (apart from us) included Air Vice-Marshall Nairn, of the R.C.A.F.; Dr. MacKenzie, Principal of the University of British Columbia; and Mr. MacLaren, of Trans-Canada Airlines. Everything was run on strictly pukka lines. We had a drop of something, for, after all, you should never eat on an empty stomach, and then the banquet began. Again the food situation got all out of control, but I suppose we managed to struggle through somehow.

When we got on towards the coffee stage, Johnny M'Hardy fixed up the tape-recorder so that everything would be taken down and used as evidence. Ed started off by explaining the purpose of the trip, and gave some of the interesting background stories to all the organisation which had been necessary. The three of us, in turn, pitched in with our contributions, and then various other personalities said their pieces. Dr. MacKenzie, in his spiel, even offered me a job at the university there so that I would be available to help with piping in B.C. Altogether the most interesting after-dinner speeches I have ever heard, for they were all about pipers and piping.

I must admit, however, that a large proportion of my attention was diverted from the speeches by the fascinating spectacle of John MacLellan smoking a cigar.

After the patter, we got down to the serious business, and each of us, in turn, put on our performances. The principal pieces consisted of "The Vaunting", from John; and "The Bells of Perth", from me. With such excellent company and such a happy atmosphere, we were in no mood for laments. After the straight selections we played a large number of request items, and, altogether, I think, the night was a great success. I know that John, James and I enjoyed ourselves thoroughly. We appreciated the happy company and were glad also of the opportunity of having an evening with the men who had been chiefly responsible for making our trip possible.

When this function was officially over, a number of us went on to the beautiful home of Air Vice-Marshall Nairn, where we were entertained royally. I may have mentioned already that in Canada the most important part of the house is the basement or "rumpus room" which, in many piper's homes, is converted into a practice room, or pub, or both. In this case it was a bar and lounge, and we did justice to both. The only snag was that the Vice-Marshall was very keen that we should all go in for a swim in his private pool, and I don't like refusing to oblige my host. But I'd rather refuse to co-operate than find myself up to the neck in cold wet stuff at one in the morning.

The second important event was the big concert in the Georgia Auditorium, but before that came off we had a lot of exploring around to do. We found out quite a lot of things, such as that James MacKenzie is a better golfer than either of the touring pipers, in spite of our having had a crafty morning's practice while he was off at the dancing. The game, incidentally, was slightly complicated by the fact that a ball on the green was liable to be lifted by the casual squirrel, and the concentration of the putt was upset by the flight of small scarlet birds and the hop past of giant robins.

We learned a great deal, too, about the methods used to solve traffic problems. For one thing, a pedestrian may not cross the road except at the corner of a block. The fact that motorists never expect people to step off the pavement in the middle of a block, combined with the fact that all traffic travels on the right-hand side of the road, nearly cost me my life to begin with. Finding our way around, however, was tremendously simplified by the sensible way in which streets and avenues are numbered and also by the brilliant scheme of putting a number on the lampost at the corner to indicate which numbers are contained in the next block.

Ed took us to see a "two minute check-up" in operation. In B.C. every car must be certified to be road-worthy at regular intervals, and the system of checking brakes, lights, axles, wheels and all the rest has to be seen to be believed. The car to be tested drives in at one end, and mechanics with a check card take over.

By the time the owner has walked through and paid his fee, the test is completed.

Ed, also told us of a marvellous "One minute car wash", where you drive your car in, and, in one minute, it is completely washed and polished. This also has to be seen to be believed, and we didn't see it. Plenty of "Five-minutes", and even a "Two-minute" wash, but that's as low as we could get.

The night lights of Vancouver were another marvellous sight for us. Every cafe and store has flashing neon signs displaying wonderful ingenuity which is sadly lacking here. One bright advertiser has a model of a piper in lights, about twelve feet tall, and the fingers on the chanter flash up and down in brilliant colours. The detail and general design are so good that you can even recognise the piper from whose photograph the design was made, for there, twice as large as life, at a street corner in Vancouver on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, four thousand miles from Scotland, stands, at this moment no doubt, the figure of James B. Robertson himself.

We also visited two broadcasting stations in the city, and boy, would Hugh Macphie have got a shock if he had seen them. No doubt, in his visit to Canada last year, he was suitably surprised by the lack of formality and the way in which programmes go on the air without, apparently, any preparation. Of course the situation out there is vastly different from at home. Every big town in Canada has several local stations operating within a very limited range. Each one is, of course, supported entirely by advertising and, as a result, all programmes are short and full of advice on what kind of food to eat, where to buy your clothes, which blades give best service, who makes the best chanter reeds, and so on.

The first station we visited claimed to be the oldest in B.C. and it certainly looked it. We were shown into a room which contained a piano, a small table, three chairs and a microphone. John and I were to be interviewed as interesting visitors to the city and we were given the two chairs on one side of the table. I should explain that James MacKenzie was not available at this time, and in fact, he did his broadcasts separately from us on most occasions.

The interviewer was, of course, a very pleasant character, and while a record of Robert Wilson was played to give listeners the proper atmosphere, he asked us a few questions in order to find out

what he was going to ask us later, if you see what I mean. In spite of the informality, I felt I should be at ease in a broadcasting studio by now, so I leaned back on my chair and started to cross my legs. This was a fatal mistake, for the back fell off the chair, and I almost somersaulted out of the programme. Just at that moment, we got the sign that we were on the air, and John and I had a hard job to regain our composure. We got through the interview all right, and then, still highly amused at the whole proceedings, we started to make our departure. John paused with his hand on the door-handle while saying good-bye, and then he flung the door open smartly in his best military style. Well, that's what he tried to do. Actually he threw the door-knob across the room, and the last we saw of our interviewer he was sprachling around under the piano looking for the handle and shouting good-bye to us. We were rather hilarious by the time we got out to the street, especially when we compared this with the hushed efficiency of Broadcasting House, Queen Margaret Drive.

Our second broadcast in Vancouver was quite different, although again, preparation and rehearsal were completely ignored. At this studio, we were looked after by a gentleman known to everyone as "Wee Neil," which just shows what you can get away with in radio. Wee Neil has a tremendous reputation as the commentator of a very popular Scottish programme "Mang" the Heather (Station CKWX, every Thursday at 8.30 p.m.—Get your re-treads from Bourne and Weir, Canada's largest tire-recapping plant), and his Scottish accent is reputedly one of the main attractions of the programme. When we met the gentleman, we were most impressed with his kindness and consideration for us, and altogether he is one of the most pleasant friends we made on the trip. The only thing is that he is neither wee nor is he really Scottish. The accent is switched on at the same time as the mike, but I suppose it's one way of earning a living. Anyway he does more for Scotland than most people with genuine accents.

On this occasion we were not interviewed, but simply made recordings on tape. John played a few tunes, which Neil used later to help give the concert a boost, and I made a speech about our impressions. I also put in a bit about our hope of finding old piping manuscripts, and, in fact, we did this everywhere but without success.

TORONTO INDOOR GAMES

A large and appreciative audience was present at the Toronto Indoor Games, held on Saturday, 13th February, 1954. Adjudicators were Mr Alex. MacNeill, Montreal; Mr John Wilson, Toronto; Mr George Duncan, Detroit, U.S.A. The Piobaireachd contest commenced promptly at 9 a.m.

Principal prize-winner was Bill Gilmour who was heard last year by many in Scotland. Looking very confident, he gave a fine rendition, on an excellent pipe, of the beautiful "Lament for the Only Son," without a mistake, and with a wealth of expression. Reay MacKay gave a sensitive performance of "Iain Garbh MacLeod," displaying fine fingering on a good chanter, but marring his effort by several chokes. Iain Slater, a pupil of John Wilson's, played "Mary MacLeod," a competent performance which lacked, however, expression in parts. Some of his birls on the cadences were suspect. Genial Sandy Russell, a former pupil of the College of Piping, had a disastrous day. He doubled variations, and repeated lines at random. His tune was "The Wee Spree."

In the March contest, Bill Gilmour gave another fine performance. MacKay also played well, but again chokes. W. Logan, a pupil of George Duncan's, is a piper of much promise, more of whom will be heard in the future.

John Wilson has some promising pupils coming along. There was a very close thing in the Strathspey and Reel, when Bill Gilmour and Pipe-Major C. Anderson tied, and had to play again for first and second. Breaking down in the replay, Pipe-Major Anderson conceded first place to Gilmour. J. Wakefield performed well in this event.

When the competition was over, Jack

Gilmour acted host at his home to a friendly crowd, which included the three judges, Archie Dewar, Billy MacPherson, the three Murchison brothers, George Coutts and several others.

Results:—

Piobaireachd:

- 1—W. Gilmour, 48th Highlanders, Toronto.
- 2—R. MacKay, 48th Highlanders, Toronto.
- 3—I. Slater, 48th Highlanders, Toronto

March:

- 1—W. Gilmour.
- 2—R. MacKay.
- 3—W. Logan, Flint, Michigan, U.S.A.

Strathspey and Reel:

- 1—W. Gilmour.
- 2—Pipe-Major C. Anderson, R.C.A.F., Toronto.
- 3—J. Wakefield, 48th Highlanders, Toronto.

March (16 and under):

- 1—D. MacIvor, Toronto Scottish.
- 2—T. Smith, Toronto Scottish.
- 3—A. Westbrooks, Toronto Scottish.

March (under 21):

- 1—W. Logan, Flint, Michigan, U.S.A.
- 2—K. Davies, 48th Highlanders, Toronto.
- 3—A. MacLeod, Buffalo, U.S.A.

Quartettes:

- 1—48th Highlanders, Toronto.
- 2—Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, Hamilton, Ontario.
- 3—Toronto Scottish, Toronto.

In the drumming contest, J. Brown, a lad just out of Ireland was first. The Kirkwood brothers came second and third.

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LONDON NOTES

Two young pipers—both are under 20—won the honours at the annual members' competition held by the Scottish Pipers' Society of London at the Duke of York's Headquarters, Chelsea.

R. J. Dobney won the Lewis Beaton Cup for piobaireachd with his rendering of 'Clan Chattan's Gathering.' Norman S. Reid, secretary of the Society, was second with "Lament for Patrick Og MacCrimmon." The cup, a highly-prized award, commemorates Lewis Beaton, founder of the Society.

James MacIver Robertson, son of Pipe-Major J. B. Robertson, won the march, strathspey and reel event, with Dobney second.

The competition, first held after the last war, is open to all members, but, traditionally, the professional and very experienced pipers do not enter, so that the rank and file amateurs have a clear field. This year's competition attracted a record entry.

The competition was judged by Pipe-Major David Ross, honorary pipe-major of the Society, Mr Malcolm Macmillan, and Dr Calum MacCrimmon. Pipe-Major Ross gave a short address on the tunes played.

CLAN MACLEAN ASSOCIATION.

Macleans living in the South of England gave their Clan Chief, Major Sir Charles Hector Fitzroy Maclean, Bart., of Dowart and Morvaren, a spirited reception when he spent an evening with the Clan Maclean Association, London and District branch, in the Royal Scottish Corporation Hall. More than 260 people, mostly Association members, cheered the Chief and sang songs in his honour.

Youth was very well represented at the reception. Young men and women form a large proportion of the branch membership. The branch, now nearly 400 strong, was founded at the end of last summer.

The evening began when Ian Black, of the Royal Caledonian Schools, piped the Chief and officials into the hall. The president of the branch, Mr Fitzroy Maclean, M.P., welcomed Sir Charles.

Three Presentations.

After thanking members for the warmth of their reception, Sir Charles presented the president with a copy of the march music "Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean," which had been composed on his honour,

and a sgian dubh to Ian Black to mark his appointment as the branch's first piper.

Sir Charles also presented to the branch a framed photograph of Duart Castle.

Four-year-old Ann Catriona M'Leary presented Mrs Fitzroy Maclean with a bouquet, and the platform party were piped to their seats by Pipe-Major Charles Turnbull, of the Royal Caledonian Schools; Piper Donald Allan Maclean, honorary branch piper, wearing the Chief's pipe banner on his pipes; and Piper John Mackenzie.

Mr James N. M. Maclean, branch secretary, took the platform as "Man of the House" for the evening.

Visitors included Mrs Helen Maclean Sandwith, a New Zealander, and great granddaughter of Alexander Maclean, the famous bard, "The Cooper of Coll"; Miss J. H. MacLean, from Melbourne, Australia; and Mr Conrad MacLean, a German Maclean, who served as a pilot in the last war and won the Iron Cross.

From Other Clans.

Representatives from other clans who were present included Colonel Ewen Cameron, of Lundavra, a chieftain of Clan Cameron; Mr H. Parker Buchanan, of the Clan Buchanan Society, Glasgow; Mr Malcolm S. MacNab, secretary and treasurer of the Clan Macnab Association London branch; Mr Norman MacLeod, producer of the London Highland Club dramatic circle; Mr and Mrs C. R. Hilling, of the International Clan Donald Society; and four MacDonalds from Scotland; Colonel David Graham-Campbell, a master at Eton, and Mrs Graham-Campbell; and Mr Alexander MacRae, past president of the London Gaelic Choir, and Mrs MacRae.

Well-known Macleans and other Scots present included:—

The president of the parent Maclean Association, Colonel G. H. Gardner M'Leary; the secretary of the association, Mr William Gordon MacLean; the London vice-presidents, Major Sir Alan MacLean and Major Kenneth Dugald MacLean; Dr William M'Laine, the economist, who belongs to the House of Lochbuie.

Lady Jean Rankin; Mr Donald Hugh MacLean, the B.B.C. producer; the Rev. Donald Maclean of Dochgarroch, chieftain of the Macleans of the North; and Macleans of Coll, Grishipol, and Cappurnach.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

Five Dock, New South Wales,
Australia.

Dear Sir,

I am in receipt of the new Bagpipe Tutor, and think it vastly improved. A beginner could follow quite easily the illustrations showing how the fingers are placed on the chanter; also the exercises are quite clear.

What appears to have been missed by our writers, is the scale the bagpipes represent. That is also a question asked by other musicians. I think it should be in a Bagpipe Tutor, and would be much more satisfactory than leaving it to the teacher to tell his pupils.

Manson's book (The Highland Bagpipe) mentions scale of "A" but how many pipers know what the Gamut is? Yet they can all play it!

On the scale, you show the closed "C." Which is the correct one—closed "C" or open "C"? I have made a search through all tutors, including Angus Mackay's Pibroch, MacDonald's Pibroch, Ross's large book, Glen's large Pibroch, Pipe-Major Willie Gray's, Henderson Logan's, MacPhee's Tutor, Gunn's Collection, and the many small ones.

Gunn's Collection is a very good tutor, printed by Peter Henderson in 1886. An excellent exercise which tells you of the Gamut.

Another one I have, "Piping for Boys," by J. Percy Sturock, captain of the 4th Black Watch, where the scale is well illustrated, shows the practice chanter, and the lifting of the fingers. There is the book of "The Club of True Highlanders," measuring 17in x 13in x 2in thick, which gives a large size of the scale and how to play the open "C," together with several exercises and some Pibrochs.

Now I find that Joseph MacDonald's "Bagpipe Theory," is the only one giving the closed "C." I was taught the open "C" when about nine years old by Pipe-Major John Mackay, late 93rd and also Liverpool Scottish, and by George Ross, late 90th Cameronians, and Willie Sinclair.

Willie Sinclair told me he was taught by Callum MacPherson, better known as the "Pibroch King," whose son Malcolm was here in Australia for a while. I believe he is a brother of Angus MacPherson, Invershul! I got on very well with him. He knew my style of pibroch playing and gave me a few more. I like his Maol Donn (MacCrimmon's Sweetheart), extending the top hand.

At our 1954 New Year's Day Sydney Highland Gathering, the piper got 3rd prize for MacCrimmon's Sweetheart. He played every "C" closed, right through the tune! I got 2nd, with Isabel Mackay. The piper who won 1st played Mary MacLeod! Now the question is, which is right, open "C" or closed "C," or is it a matter of taste?

I was in the Boys' Brigade Pipe Band before I was 10 years of age, and after in the 6th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, under Pipe-Major G. Ross and Pipe-Major John MacConnacher.

I have a practice chanter, given to me over 40 years ago by Professor Allan, of Edinburgh, a dancer, who was a pupil of John MacNeil, of Edinburgh. The inscription on the silver ferrule is, "Presented by the maker, Angus Mackay, to Mr James Lewis, as a mark of respect and esteem. Buckingham Palace, 2nd July, 1850."

The last two years I have been down to Victoria to meet the pipers and drummers who came out here to form a new pipe band at Castlemaine Works. Pipe-Majors Alex. M'Dermid, C. Cochrane, Duncan M'Phedran and others, and the three drummers, Gordon Jelly, Alex. M'Cormick and Tom Hume. I can tell you, it was like being back home.

I always exchange notes with my dear friend, Pipe-Major Dugald MacLachlan, late Camelon Pipe Band, Falkirk, who keeps me fresh with anything new from home in the piping world.

I have a Pibroch given to me by an old piper friend, who has since passed away. He told me he got it from an old seafaring man. It was written in pencil and very hard to understand, but I copied it the best way I could; the name is

"M'Gregor's Gathering." I cannot trace anything like it in print, and consider it very good. I am sending you a copy; you may be able to trace it.

Yours very sincerely,

THOMAS MACKAY,

Pipe-Major Highland Society,
Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

The nature of the scale of the pipe chanter was not included in the Tutor because, firstly, it is felt that beginners in their first year (the scope of Part I.) are not particularly interested in the acoustics of the pipe chanter—nor is an understanding of this in any way helpful to them in learning to play tunes. Secondly, the scale of the pipes was only established in June of last year, and an inclusion of details would have delayed the appearance of the book.

There is no doubt in the minds of the professional pipers in Scotland as to the method of playing C. Closed C is correct, open C is wrong, because it produces a flat out-of-tune note. Your ear can tell that an open C is flat, and this has been checked by scientific measurement. It is indeed surprising that the first tutor, Joseph MacDonald's treatise, showed the closed C, and all others until now have shown it open. It is much more surprising that Pipe-Major William Ross, when he revised Logan's Tutor in 1935, left the open C in, and yet Willie Ross would never play or teach an open C. Even this month, with the appearance of Robertson's book, revised by Donald S. Ramsay, we see the old story of the open C perpetuated, again by a man who would consider any one who played an open C definitely second-rate. Is this the old story of "Aye keep something tae yoursel'" as the Bard suggested?

We heartily concur with your approval of "Piping for Boys," by J. Percy Sturrock. This was an excellent book, and surely has been one of the most neglected of bagpipe publications.

It is good to hear again of Alex. MacDermid, Alex. MacCormick and the others. We hope they are getting on well. Many thanks for your most interesting and comprehensive letter. Please write again. We have not found anyone so far who has heard the "M'Gregor's Gathering" you enclosed, but we continue the search. Perhaps

you could send the variations some time.

* * * * *

LETTER FROM EDMONTON, ALBERTA.

Dear Sir,

Just a line or two to show we are still alive and kicking, although we have just had a fourteen day spell of cold weather ranging from 10 to 30 degrees below zero. This week it has gone to 15 to 45 degrees above zero—quite a change!

There is very little in the way of piping news, the Boys and Girls Pipe Bands hold their usual monthly concerts during the winter season, the bands being the main attraction at their respective functions.

The Legion Pipe Band played the opening night at an Ice Cycles Show on Monday, 25th January. This show is featuring "Brigadoon" as their attraction this year.

This is a very elaborate show touring the United States and Canada each year. The costumes are very spectacular, being different each year.

The Girls Pipe Band, along with accompanying artistes staged a concert for the benefit of the inmates of a local mental institute on Friday, 29th January. This is an institution for the milder type of mental patient.

We are hoping to have the Girls Pipe Band do a series of broadcasts over one of our local radio stations during the months of April and May.

One of our young drummers, a member of the Legion Pipe Band, was the victim of a car accident on 5th January, 1954. A truck travelling over the centre line on the highway collided with his car. He suffered severe concussion and face lacerations. Fortunately he is beginning to recover, and hopes to be well eventually.

Mr. Harry Lunan has requested that I ask if you could supply him with the music of the "Rakes of Kildare".

Enclosed is postcard picture of bear fishing while his mate is looking for berries at a lake adjacent to the famed Jasper Park Lodge.

Jack Armstrong.

PRESENTATION TO MRS RAE.

The following letter has been received for publication:—

Dear Sir,

I feel proud to accept this gift handed to me from the friends and pupils of the late Pipe-Major John MacDonald, and I thank you for the kind thoughts that prompted you to make this presentation.

I know the great regard in which you all held Mr MacDonald. During the time in which I have nursed Mr MacDonald, I have opened the door and shown in pupils and friends. Not only from Scotland, but from as far afield as New Zealand and Canada. Some came to greet an old friend, others came as they said themselves in "search of truth." The true interpretation of pipe music.

Although Mr MacDonald was sometimes in indifferent health, he was ever glad to welcome a friend or pupil. Indeed, to be his pupil was to be his friend. He was never happier than when talking over old times with a friend, or listening attentively to a piobaireachd played as he had taught it. I am glad that I was able to give Mr MacDonald, in his declining years, the care and attention which he needed, and I am deeply touched by this gesture on the part of his friends and pupils.

We all miss him, but such acts of kindness and appreciation will keep his memory ever green.

Yours Sincerely,

Inverness.

* * *

Mrs RAE.

Port-Glasgow.

Dear Sir,

May I be granted the courtesy of your columns to bring to light an incident which took place recently at a Saturday night meeting of the Scottish Pipers' Association? There is unfortunately no higher authority to which the case can be taken, and, since your paper has the widest circulation today among pipers, I should like to make the matter known to the piping public through its medium.

The incident concerns myself and one of the office-bearers of the S.P.A., who will remain nameless throughout this letter, and it arose in connection with

the Amateur and Juvenile Competition, which was held on Saturday, 17th April. About one month before the closing date for entries, I wrote to this official asking for necessary particulars about the competition, such as in what events would I be eligible to compete, and what was the entry fee for each event. When one week passed without reply, then two, three, and, finally, four weeks, I realised something must be wrong, because, normally, a letter can come from Glasgow to Port-Glasgow in one day. I would not, therefore have minded the delay, but, on Monday, 5th April, since entries had to be in by the 10th April and I still knew very little about the competition, I decided to write again, as I think I was quite justified in doing. Still there was no reply, and, on Wednesday, 7th April, before it was too late in any case, I sent in an entry with a postal order for 4s, without being very sure is this was correct or not.

I went to the S.P.A. on the following Saturday with the intention of demanding an explanation from the official, but before I saw him, I spoke to Pipe-Major Robert Reid, and he informed me that the official had been indisposed. This at once explained the whole thing to me. I understood the position, and decided to forget the whole business. Consequently, when the official came in, I said nothing to him, but, instead, he approached me, and told me that if I was the person who had been writing to him, it was time I learned some manners. Now I ask you! If there had been any bad manners displayed (and I do not believe there had been up till then) by whom were they displayed?

I had written asking for information, and I was surely entitled to expect an answer. It is no more than common courtesy to reply to any letter, but when a man who is in a responsible position such as the representative of the S.P.A., gets a letter asking for specific details, it is not only courtesy but his duty to reply, and if he fails to reply he is neglecting that duty. The man had a good excuse, nevertheless, and that should have been the end of the matter, as it would have been so far as I was concerned, had not the official—far from apologising as he should have done—launched an ill-advised and unjustified attack on me. In what way did I show myself ill-mannered? If there was anything in the least objectionable in any of the three letters I sent him, I hereby openly chal-

BOUND VOLUMES OF THE "PIPING TIMES."

leuge him to produce them and to show to me or to anyone else one sentence that could reasonably give offence to him.

These are the facts and a fair statement of the case. I leave it to your readers to judge between us.

Why do I write just now on such a trivial affair? For two reasons: First of all, to clear my name of the charge brought against me, which is serious enough when it is completely unfounded. Secondly, as a piece of friendly advice to the S.P.A. It is time such office-bearers as this one (happily there are not many of them) were made to mend their ways, or the sooner they relinquish their duties the better. This was, in the first place, a serious neglect of duty, which I was very willing to excuse in the circumstances; to this was added, however, an unbearable insult, which I am prepared to accept from no man. I do not mind so much for my own part, but if this is the way people are treated in their dealings with the S.P.A., then that body will make more enemies than it will friends. Finally, I would have much preferred to have settled this difference in private with the person concerned, but despite all his advice to me on the subject of manners, he himself showed the good manners to turn his head away and refuse to listen to me when I tried to explain the situation.

There is one more point I wish to emphasise. This unfortunate incident in no way affects my relations with the S.P.A. as a whole. On any occasion on which I have visited the club, I have received the friendliest of welcomes, and the office-bearers and members have been very nice indeed to me at all times. It is the greater pity that one man should, by his association with the S.P.A., involve that body in incidents as disreputable as the above..

Yours Faithfully,

FINLAY MACNEILL.

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