The Scottish National Dictionary. Designed partly on regional lines and partly on historical principles, and containing all the Scottish words known to be in use or to have been in use since c. 1700. Edited by William Grant, M.A., LL.D. (1929-46) and David D. Murison, M.A., B.A. (1946-). Edinburgh. The Scottish National Dictionary Association Ltd.

Kurt H. Wittig

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RE V E W S

Prebble has pointed in his account of the crucial and classical instance of Glengarry, Alistair Randalson, chief of Clan Macdonell, to the varying degrees of understanding and ignorance manifested by Burns and by Scott. Detailed and all-inclusive accounts of the treatment of the "burnings" in Scottish literature, whether Gaelic or non-Gaelic, remain still to be written. Mr. Prebble is perhaps himself best qualified to describe the relevant but embarrassingly limited non-Gaelic literature. Nor, should he undertake such an account, need he be too sober and detached and passionless: the grave and ironic and shameful truths of this history can never be grasped by Malthusian or Benthamite theorist dead to human ties or by some scribbling gillie of a late twentieth century heir to Glengarry or Sutherland.

A. M. F. G U N N
TEXAS TECHNOLOGICAL COLLEGE

The Scottish National Dictionary. Designed partly on regional lines and partly on historical principles, and containing all the Scottish words known to be in use or to have been in use since c. 1700. Edited by William Grant, M.A., LL.D. (1929-46) and David D. Murison, M.A., B.A. (1946-). Edinburgh. The Scottish National Dictionary Association Ltd.

The Scottish National Dictionary goes back to a suggestion of Sir William A. Craigie, made as long ago as 1907, and is the modern counterpart to Craigie's Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue. Publication started in 1929 at King's College, Aberdeen, but SND has in the meantime moved to Edinburgh, where it is now under the auspices of the School of Scottish Studies of Edinburgh University.

For SND, a total length of 10 volumes is envisaged. The earlier volumes had four fascicules of 80 pages each, but in recent years the length has grown and the latest half dozen parts had 128 pp., making volumes of 512 pp. The pre-war subscription price was £20, payable in four yearly instalments; some ten years ago the price was raised to £30, and more recently to £40. But even so, SND may be the best bargain to be had anywhere on the book market: a volume of 512 pp. in Royal 4° for £4, or roughly $11! This unbelievable price can only be maintained by substantial donations, especially from the Carnegie Trust for the Uni-

[275]
STUDIES IN SCOTTISH LITERATURE

versities of Scotland, the Burns Federation, the Educational Institute of
Scotland, a number of town councils (Glasgow, Aberdeen), and a good
many private individuals, Burns Clubs, etc. from three continents.

This year, SND can look back on 35 years of publication and 22
parts. Work was often held up by war and post-war difficulties, but of
late the different parts have succeeded one another more quickly. Some
three years ago, half-way house was reached, and at the present rate of
progress, the dictionary should be completed in a little over a dozen years.
Certainly all students of Scottish literature wish Mr. David D. Morrison,
the very efficient editor, best of luck and speedy progress in his life's
work.

For there can be no doubt about the urgent need for this dictionary.
Before SND (if we exclude works which are essentially glossaries, such as
Chambers' Scots Dialect Dictionary) there is only Jamieson's Dictionary
of the Scottish Language of 1808-25 (!), and this, necessarily, often
makes a poor show. SND deals with the vocabulary of literary and spoken
Scots, including the dialects of the mainland, Orkney, Shetland, and Ul-
ster, from 1700 to the present day; it does not deal with Gaelic or Stan-
ard English as spoken in Scotland. The sources comprise some 5,000
books, whose bibliography will form part of the last volume, and a large
number of correspondents, readers, excerptors, and experts. The general
method followed is that of the New English Dictionary, while the regional
treatment follows Wright's English Dialect Dictionary. A general
introduction of 50 pp. in Vol. I gives a survey of the boundaries of Scottish
speech, of Scots and dialect literature, of phonetic change, a phonetic
comparison between modern Scots and modern English, and a phonetic
characterisation of the dialect districts.

The aim of SND is twofold: it aims at being a comprehensive dic-
tionary of the Scots tongue, and it intends to be an encyclopedia of
Scottish institutions, the Church, the legal system, trades and crafts,
children's games, national dishes, social history, superstitions and folk-
lore, national games, local ceremonies, etc. This encyclopedic aspect is of
immense help in understanding Scottish life and Scottish literature, espe-
cially since the definitions and sources given are highly illuminating. One
need only mention some of the obvious examples (Gretna Green; Hbbie;
Haggis; Halloween; bap, stab and low; bert of Midlothian; bogmanay;
Hieland) to indicate the scope of this "dictionary." The editors are
certainly not claiming too much when they call SND "a history of the
Scottish people arranged alphabetically."

The encyclopedic character also permeates the purely lexicographical
side. The quotations given to illustrate the usage of a word can often
serve as definitions and seem to be the most characteristic example from the whole of Scottish literature. The rich vocabulary of Scots has been set down with painstaking scholarship that leaves nothing to be desired. Even in so well-known texts as those of Scott, the ballads, or Burns we find many instances to show how vague or even slipshod all of the former glossaries were: in most Burns editions lease me (on)—to take an example at random—is considered to be a verb "command me to"; in SND it is shown to be a frequent contraction of lief is me (on), and this is what gives the passage its true meaning and allows a full enjoyment. Dozens of similar examples could be quoted, and in each case we not only learn the true denotation, but also see the expression in all its connotations and in its development and usage. And we finally come to enjoy a poem like Burns's "Willie Wastie," which so far all glossaries have fought shy of.

A comprehensive review of some 2,500 pp. of dictionary is not the place for detailed discussion of individual points of etymology, pronunciation (given in narrow API transcription), relationship, etc.; for more than a dozen years, Anglia has carried my extensive reviews of the parts of SND as they appeared. But I should at least add that SND is also a valuable help in face of all those "false friends"—the words that look so familiar and still mean a completely different thing in Scotland. If you read the word indictment in a Scottish newspaper, it may not mean what you think, but "the form of process by which a criminal is brought to trial at the instance of the Lord Advocate"; an inquest in Scotland is "a body, part jury part witness, which made inquiry into such matters as the service of heirs and cognition of the insane." Would the general reader know that to run one's letters means "to await one's trial," or would he understand a police statement saying that "the theft of four hens was libelled in the first charge"? Traps like these are frequent in Scottish texts, even when written in Standard English. They are a reminder that Scots is not just a dialect, but seems to aspire—in the same way as American English—to the status of a semi-independent language with its own history and traditions.

Any page of SND is ample evidence of this history and tradition. We see a great many direct lines from Old English, lines that no longer have parallels in modern English. We come across a substantial number of words from Latin and French that have not gone through the medium of English and remind us of the strong links of Scotland with the Continent and, under the Auld Alliance, with France especially. These close contacts must be kept in mind for a phenomenon like that of the aura- tion of the old Makars: this may have been no more artificial than the language of Chaucer, but while in England the development went on
unbroken, the Scottish development of a higher language was abruptly cut short by the Union (and the Reformation, which translated the Bible into English, not Scots). But what makes the most fascinating study is the rich vocabulary of Gaelic and Scandinavian origin. The careful work of SND will enable scholars to investigate both the regional domains and the special fields of this adopted vocabulary. That the Highlands and their fringe are rich in words of Gaelic origin will surprise nobody; but it came as a surprise to me to see that Galloway and the Southwest have such a large share. The things, too, that are given Gaelic names are interesting: fish and birds and plants of course; but also feelings, trades, articles of dress, terms of endearment as well as derogatory words, food, and especially a rich vocabulary graphically descriptive of the features of a landscape or a man. Often we see traces of how the ancient Scots translated their thoughts from their native Gaelic into the language of the Sassenach: gobhar in Gaelic means both "goat" and "sheep"—and the Scots word for goat, "gait," has the same secondary meaning. The Scandinavian vocabulary, too, dominant in the Orkneys and Shetlands, has its ramifications on the mainland, and its special charm seems to be a vividly descriptive faculty of all the things connected with the shore, the sea, and weather at sea. I hope that soon after its completion SND will give rise to studies of vocabulary of different origins in Scotland. In quite a number of cases, SND also points out the Scottish origin of English and American words (Dean of Faculty, faculty, bellam, hard drink, bold it!, bold up, bastie pudding, beft, high school, janitor).

More or less as a by-product of the dictionary, we find numerous entries concerning historical grammar, phonology, syntax, and we see the Scottish language not as a collection of words, but as a living organism. Again we come across the Gaelic substratum in sentences like "it's a rough sea that's in it" (in) or "I'm after telling him" (after).

I may sound over-enthusiastic about SND, yet I am not blind to certain shortcomings—but they are few and far between: an occasional cross reference, a doubtful etymology here or there, a chance word in a modern poem not listed. But in all the years of reviewing SND I have always been hard put to it to find any point at all which I could raise as an issue. On the other hand, in all my studies of Scottish literature I have felt the terrible need for this dictionary. The parts already in existence have enormously facilitated—and enriched—my work. There can be no doubt that wherever Scottish literature is studied the Scottish National Dictionary is a must.

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[278]