

## Moladh Beinn Dóbhraín In Praise of Beinn Dóbhraín

Le Donnchadh Bàn

Rann 1

**An t-urram thar gach beinn aig Beinn Dóbhraín;**  
Precedence over every ben has Ben Dobhraín;  
**Na chunnaic mi fo 'n ghréin 's i bu bhòidhche leam:**  
Of all I have seen beneath the sun, I deemed her loveliest:  
**Monadh fada réidh, cuilidh 'm faighte féidh,**  
A long, unbroken moor, covert where deer are found;  
**Soilleireachd an t-sléibh bha mi sònrachadh;**  
The brightness of the slope I noted specially;  
**Doireachan nan geug, coill' anns am bi feur,**  
Coppices of boughs, woodland where grass grows-  
**'S foinneasach an spréidh bhíos a chòmhnaidh ann.**  
Goodly is the stock that is dwelling there

Rann 2

**'S i 'n eilid bheag bhinneach bu ghuiniche sraonadh,**  
'Tis the little hind of taper head was acutest in snuffing,  
**Le cuinnean geur biorach a' sireadh na gaoithe:**  
With her keen, sharp nostril, exploring the wind:  
**Gasganach speireach, feadh chreachainn na beinne,**  
Short-tailed, slender-limbed, roaming throughout the fell,  
**Le eagal roimh theine cha teirinn i h-aonach;**  
Afraid of fire, she will not descend from her mountain;  
**Ged théid i 'na cabhaig cha ghearain i maothan.**  
Though she be hurried, no chest complaint ails her.

Rann 3

**Tha 'n eilid anns an fhrith mar bu chòir dhi bhith,**  
The hind is in the forest as she ought to be,  
**Far am faigh i milteach glan-feòirneanach;**  
Here she may have sweet grass, clean, fine-bladed;  
**Bruchorachd is cìob, lusan am bi brìgh,**  
Heath-rush and deer's hair grass, herbs in which strength resides,  
**Chuireadh sult is ìth air a lòineanaibh;**  
And which would make her flanks plump and fat-covered;  
**Fuaran anns am bi biolaire gun dìth**  
A spring in which there is abundant water-cress,  
**'S mìlse leath' na 'm fion, 's e gun òladh i.**  
She deems more sweet than wine, and would drink of it

Rann 4

**Tha 'n eilid anns a' ghleannan seo, 's chan amadan gun eòlas**  
The hind is in this little glen; 'tis not a duffer without skill  
**A leanadh i mar b' aithne dha tigh'nn farasda 'na còmhdhail:**  
Could stalk her if he knew not how to make contact with her quietly;  
**Gu faiteach bhith 'na h-earalas, tigh'nn faigse dhi mu 'n caraich i,**  
To guard against her warily, drawing near to her before she stirs,  
**Gu faicilleach, glé earraigeach, mu 'm fairich i 'ga còir e:**  
Cautiously, most toilsomely, lest she should sense him near her;

**Urram** – precedence, preference; **thar** – over; **gach** – every; **beinn** – mountain; **chunnaic** – seen; **fo** – under; **ghréin** – sun; **bhòidhche** – loveliest, most beautiful; **leam** – to me; **Monadh** – moorland; **fada** – long; **réidh** – smooth, unbroken; **cuilidh** – hollow, covert; **faighte** – found; **Soilleireachd** – brightness; **sléibh** – slope; **sònrachadh** – noting, remarking; **Doireachan** – grove of trees; **geug** – branch, bough; **coill'** – wodd, forest; **feur** – grass; **foinneasach** – well favoured; **spréidh** – livestock; **chòmhnaidh** – dwell; **eilid** – hind; **bheag** – little; **bhinneach** – antlered, peaked; **ghuiniche** – most acute; **sraonadh** – snuffing; **cuinnean** – nostril; **geur** – sharp; **biorach** – sharp pointed; **sireadh** – searching, exploring; **gaoithe** – wind; **Gasganach** – tailed; **speireach** – slender-limbed; **feadh** – throughout; **chreachainn** – rock summit; **beinne** – mountain; **eagal** – fear; **roimh** – of it; **theine** – fire; **teirinn** – descend; **aonach** – hill; **Ged** – although; **théid** – goes; **cabhaig** – hurry; **ghearain** – complaint; **maothan** – chest or breast; **fhrith** – forest; **chòir** – condition, circumstance; **dhi bhith** – should be; **Far** – where; **faigh** – find, get; **milteach** – numerous, many; **glan-feòirneanach** – sweet grass; **Bruchorachd** – heath-rush; **cìob** – deer's hair grass; **lusan** – herbs; **brìgh** – strength; **Chuireadh** – would put or make; **sult** – plump; **ìth** – fat; **lòineanaibh** – flanks; **Fuaran** – spring; **biolaire** – watercress; **gun dìth** – without want; **mìlse** – sweeter; **leath'** – to her; **fion** – wine; **òladh** – drink; **ghleannan** – small glen; **amadan** – fool; **eòlas** – knowledge, skill; **leanadh** – follow, stalk; **aithne** – know; **tigh'nn** – come; **farasda** – quietly; **còmhdhail** – meet; **faiteach** – timid, wary; **earalas** – caution; **tigh'nn** – coming; **faigse** – nearer; **caraich** – move, stir; **faicilleach** – carefully; **earraigeach** – difficulty; **fairich** – feel, sense; **còir** – near;

This translation is taken from *Orain Dhonnchaidh Bhàin* edited by Aonghas MacLeòid. We sing four verses of a major poem by Donnchaidh Bàn (Duncan Ban MacIntyre) which contains the equivalent of about 46 verses. As with most Gaelic poetry it is intended to be sung. In this case the song takes the form of a *piobaireachd*, a type of pipe music which starts with a ground or theme called the *urlar* and proceeds with variations on the theme called *siubhail*. The variations become more complicated as the tune progresses. In former times the theme was repeated after each variation culminating in the most complicated variation called the *crunluath* before finally repeating the theme. Duncan Ban MacIntyre was born in 1724 and died in 1812. He lived a very interesting life and for a large part of it he was employed in the Glen Etive, Glen Orchy and Glen Lochay areas as a forester, an early form of gamekeeper. His love of wild life, mountains and hunting is clearly brought out in this song.