ORAN BHANCÚBHAR (A SONG OF VANCOUVER)

This song was sent in by Bill Sarjeant, who noticed it in Tocher, a journal published by the School of Scottish Studies (no. 42, p. 408). According to Tocher's notes, the song was written by Alec MacDonald, who was born on the island of Boreray, emigrated to Canada in 1913, became a policeman in Vancouver (according to internal evidence in the song), and never returned to Scotland. The version is a composite: verses 1 to 4, 6 and 9 were recorded from Ronald John MacDonald of Balmartin, North Uist, and the other verses from Ronald MacDonald of Clachan, North Uist. Apparently other verses exist elsewhere. This version is reprinted with the permission of Tocher.

"Airigh Grànnda" in verse 6 refers to a small island off the island of Vallay.

Tocher includes an English translation:

**Though Vancouver is a beautiful place**
With its tall buildings and level streets,
Though others praise it as a place to live in,
The land I have left was [the more] beautiful
for me.

**Though Vancouver is a flowery place**
With its fresh greenery and its young trees,
It is a low-lying island far, far from this country
That I always keep remembering.

Alas that I am not on board the steamer tonight
With the hills of Uist coming into sight,
Where the rushes grow tall in the green valleys,
Sweet is the sound of the thrushes to my ears.

Often have I set out wildfowling there
Down by the shore on a fine morning:
Oh these were the best days that ever were --
Yearning for them fills me with sorrow.

There you can see beautiful flowery slopes
And level fields that will bear a heavy crop
of barley --
No wonder I should be missing it:
That's the best place, not Vancouver.

It is a dreary business walking the streets
Peering into corners to try and catch a thief.
Oh, how much I would rather be
in Airigh Grannda,
Lifting [lobster] creels and setting them out
towards Vallay!

**The ones I love are on the other side of the ocean,**
So I will return yet to beautiful Uist:
Many a summer has passed over my head
Since I left my dear one dwelling in the glen.

And when winter comes, the time for ceilidhs,
All the old men will be telling me yarns,
Every old worthy with his own story
And the young people listening with delight.

But I hope if I am alive and well
That I may return to live where I spent my youth,
Where I could find happiness among my own folk:
I was a fool the day I left them.

ORAN BHANCÚBHAR

Ged tha Bhancúbharr 'na àite bòidheach
Le thogail arda 's shràidean còimheadh,
Ged mholas còch e mar àite còmhnaidh,
'Se 'n tir a dh'thag mi bha dhòmhsa bòidheach.

Ged tha Bhancúbharr 'na àite flùrach
Le dhuilleach ùrail 's le chràobhan òga,
'Se 'n t-eilean tseal глé fhad o'n tir seo
Bhios mise cuimhneachadh air an còmhnaidh.

'S truagh nach mise bha nochd 'san stiomain
Is beanntan Uibhist a' tughinn 'nam chromhair,
Far 'm fad an luachair 's na gleannan uaine,
Gur binn 'nam chluasan-sa fuaim nan sméarach.
"S gur tric a dh'fhalbh mi a shealg nan eun ann
Ri beul a' chladaich air maduinn cheutach:
O siud na làithean a b'fhèarr bha riamh ann,
'S gan caoidh an dràsd tha 'gam fhàgail cianail.

Chi mi leòidean bhios bòidheach flùrach
Is machaire cómhnard bheir eòrna dlùth dheth --
Chan iongnadh dhòhsa ged bhithinn 'ga ionndrainn:
Be siod an t-àite 's cha b'e Bhancùbhair.

"S gur h-olc an obair bhith 'siubhal sràideadh
A' coimhead an cùil feuch an lorg thu meàrleach.
O 's mòr gum b'fhèarr leam bhith 'n Airigh Grànda
A' togail chliabh is 'gan cur sios gu Bhàlaigh!

ca.50

S tha luchd mo chions' air taobh thall na linnidh
'S gun till mi fhathast do dh'Uibhist bhòidheach:
'S gur h-iomadh samhradh chaidh thar mo cheann-sa
On dh'fhág mi m'annsachd 'sa' gheann a' comhnaidh.

'S nuair thig an geamhradh is am a' chèilidh,
'S ann bhios gach seanduine déanamh sgeul dhomh:
Gach bodach còir is a stòridh fhéin aig',
'S a' mhuinntir òg air an dòigh 'gan eisdeachd.

Ach tha mi 'n dòchas ma's beò no slàn mi,
Gun till mi chòmhnaidh far 'n òg a bha mi,
Far 'm faighinn sòlas a measg mo chàirdean:
Bha mise gòrach latha rinne mi 'm fàgail.