

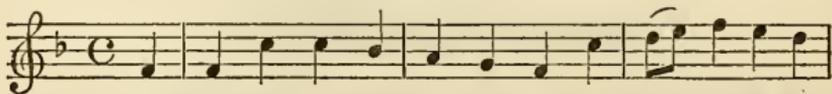
THE BANKS OF HELICON.

In what is called the Maitland Manuscript (Pepys's Collection, Cambridge)—that is, a transcribed assemblage of poems of the sixteenth century, which we owe to Sir Richard Maitland and perhaps some other members of his family—appears a song called *The Banks of Helicon*, in the complicated measure which Montgomery in that age exemplified in *The Cherry and the Slae*, and which Burns was the last to employ (*Epistle to Davy, &c.*). It is the composition of a learned pen, and celebrates the charms of a mistress, with classic references, in a style approaching idolatry, but is not without a certain poetical *verve* far from displeasing. Modern literary antiquaries seem to think it possibly a composition of Alexander Montgomery, seeing it is in metre and some other respects so like his undoubted composition *The Cherry and the Slae*. Montgomery is believed to have died between 1607 and 1611.

Several musical manuscripts of the early part of the seventeenth century¹ present a tune called *The Banks of Helicon*, indicated in one as a work of Mr Andrew Blackhall, minister of Inveresk, who died in 1609, at the age of 73, and appears to have been

¹ See Sibbald's *Chronicle of Scottish Poetry*, iii. 191. Stenhouse's *Notes to Johnson's Museum*, p. 406. Laing's *Additional Notes to Stenhouse*, p. *453, and Introduction, p. lxxxiii.

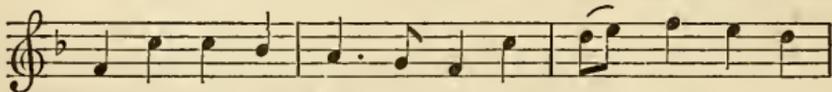
a skilful musician, as there is extant a piece of five-part music for the 101st psalm, stated to have been composed 'by Maister Andro Blakehall in Halyrudehouse, 1569, and giffen in propyne to the kyng.' As this air perfectly suits the song in the Maitland Manuscript, there can be little doubt that the one was composed for the other. It seems, therefore, allowable to give in this place a selection from the somewhat tedious verses of the song, in connection with the air; a fair specimen of the formal, well-bred, but not very engaging chamber minstrelsy of the reign of the Sixth James.



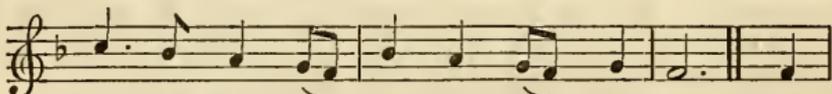
De - clare, ye banks of Hel - i - con, Par - nass - us hill, and



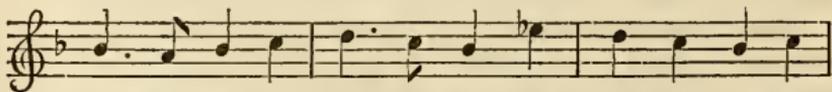
dales ilk one, And foun - tain Ca - bel - lein, Gif



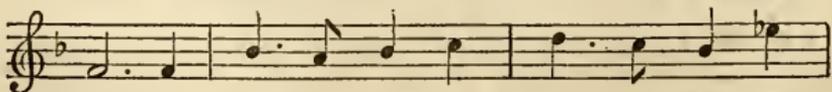
o - ny of your Mus - es all Or nymph - is may be



per - e - gal Un - to my la - dy sheen. Or



if the la - dies that did lave Their bo - dies by your



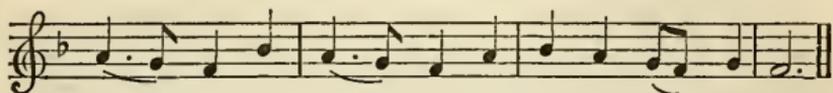
brim, So seem - ly were or yet so suave, So



beau - ti - ful or trim. Con - tem - ple, ex-



am - ple Tak by her pro - per port, Gif



on - y so bon - nie Among you did re - sort.

Declare, ye banks of Helicon,
 Parnassus hill, and dales ilk one,
 And fountain Cabellein,
 Gif ony of your Muses all
 Or nymphis may be peregal
 Unto my lady sheen.
 Or if the ladies that did lave
 Their bodies by your brim,
 So seemly were or yet so suave,
 So beautiful or trim.
 Contemple, example
 Tak by her proper port,
 Gif ony so bonnie
 Among you did resort.

No, no : forsooth was never none
 That with this perfect paragon,
 In beauty might compare.
 The Muses wad have given the grie
 To her, as to the *A-per-se*
 And peerless pearl preclair.
 Thinking with admiration
 Her person so perfyte,
 Nature in her creation
 To form her took delight.

Confess then, express then,
Your nymphs and all their race,
For beauty, of duty,
Should yield and give her place.
