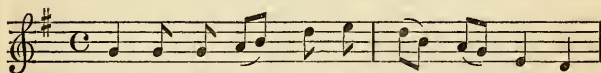
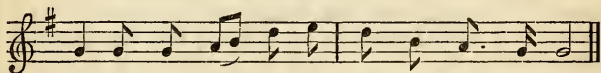




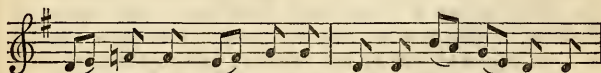
THE FLOWERS OF THE FOREST.



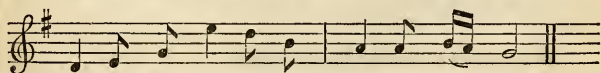
I've heard the lilt - ing at our yowe milk - ing,



Lass - es a - lilt - ing be - fore the dawn of day;



But now they're moan - ing on il - ka green loan - ing—The



Flowers of the Fo - rest are a' wede a - way.

Such is the early form of this melody, as preserved in the Skene Manuscript (see *Introduction*). The first and fourth lines of the verse set to it, are the remains of an old ballad, for which probably it was the appropriate air, and of which Sir Walter Scott caught up one other fragment, presenting, he remarked,¹ a simple and affecting image to the mind :

[Now] I ride single on my saddle,
For the flowers of the forest are a' wede away.

It seems to relate to some depopulating blow sustained by the district commonly called the Forest—namely, Selkirkshire. Such an incident we readily discover in Scottish history, in the overthrow of the army of James IV. at Flodden, September 1513.

In the last century, there lived in Edinburgh an unmarried lady of family, who is remembered as the chief ornament of her circle, through her talents, intelligence, and good sense—Miss Jean Elliot of Minto. Her father was Sir Gilbert Elliot of Minto, Lord Justice-clerk of Scotland, the able son of an able father, who rose in high state employments under King William, with whom he had returned from an unmerited exile, sustained under the misgovernment of the Stuarts. A son of the Justice-clerk, bearing his own name, was also a man of eminent talents, which he did not disdain occasionally to exercise in penning verses. It is stated that Miss Jeanie, who was born in 1727, shewed such lively faculties in her girlhood, that even then her father would employ her to read his law-papers to him, and declared that he profited by the shrewdness of her remarks. One day, having a conversation with her on the Battle of Flodden, he offered a bet that she would not compose a ballad on that subject;² and thus it came to pass that she took up the fragments of the old lost ballad, and restored them, as it were, to life in the following composition :

¹ *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, iii. 128.

² Mr D. Laing's Notes on Stenhouse, Johnson's *Museum*, i. *131.

I've heard the lilting at our yowe-milking,
Lasses a-lilting before the dawn of day ;
But now they are moaning on ilka green loaning—
The Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away.

At buchts, in the morning, nae blythe lads are scorning,
The lasses are lonely, and dowie, and wae ;
Nae daffin', nae gabbin', but sighing and sabbing,
Ilk ane lifts her leglen and hies her away.

In hairst, at the shearing, nae youths now are jeering,
The bandsters are lyart, and runkled, and gray ;
At fair, or at preaching, nae wooing, nae fleeching—
The Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away.

At e'en, at the gloaming, nae swankies are roaming,
'Bout stacks wi' the lasses at bogle to play ;
But ilk ane sits drearie, lamenting her dearie—
The Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away.

Dule and wae for the order, sent our lads to the Border !
The English, for ance, by guile wan the day ;
The Flowers of the Forest, that foucht aye the foremost,
The prime o' our land, are cauld in the clay.

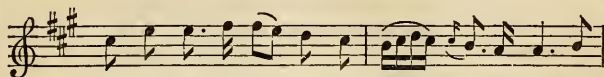
We hear nae mair lilting at our yowe-milking,
Women and bairns are heartless and wae ;
Sighing and moaning on ilka green loaning—
The Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away.

Miss Elliot died at her brother Admiral Elliot's house of Mount Teviot, Roxburghshire, on the 29th March 1805. It cannot apparently be ascertained that she wrote any other song

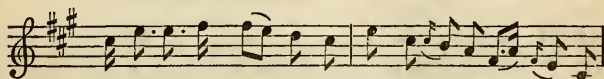
or poem ; but the probability, of course, is, that she did not restrict herself to this one happy effusion.

Contemporary with Miss Elliot, there lived in Edinburgh another lady of family, possessed like her of most attractive social qualities, and a frequent and ready writer of verses. Born Alison Rutherford of Fernylee, Selkirkshire, she married, in 1731, Mr Patrick Cockburn, advocate, whom she long survived. She was also familiar with the old ballad of *The Flowers of the Forest*, and some years, it is believed, before Miss Elliot's song was written, composed one to the same tune, and with the same burden, not referring to Flodden, but to a crisis of a monetary nature, when seven good lairds of the Forest were reduced to insolvency, in consequence of imprudent speculations. Mrs Cockburn's song was as follows :

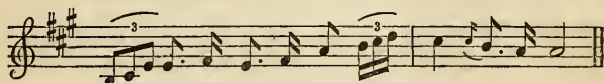
I've seen the smil-ing of For-tune be-guil-ing, I've
felt all its fa-vours and found its de-cay;
Sweet was its bless-ing, kind its ca-ress-ing, But
now it is fled, fled far a-way!
I've seen the fo-rest a-dor-ned the fore-most, With



flow - ers of the fair - est, most plea - sant and gay; Sae



bon - ny was their bloom - ing! their scent the air per - fu - ming! But



now they are wi - ther - ed and weed - ed a - way.

I've seen the smiling of fortune beguiling,
I've felt all its favours and found its decay;
Sweet was its blessing, kind its caressing,
But now it is fled—fled far away!

I've seen the forest adorned the foremost
With flowers of the fairest, most pleasant and gay;
Sae bonnie was their blooming! their scent the air per -
fuming!
But now they are withered and weeded away.

I've seen the morning with gold the hills adorning,
And loud tempest storming before the mid-day.
I've seen Tweed's silver streams, shining in the sunny beams,
Grow drumly and dark as he rowed on his way.

Oh, fickle Fortune, why this cruel sporting?
Oh, why still perplex us, poor sons of a day?
Nae mair your smiles can cheer me, nae mair your frowns
can fear me;
For the Flowers of the Forest are withered away.