

I HAE LAID THREE HERRING IN SAUT.

I hae laid three herrin' in saut—

Lass, gin ye'll tak me, tell me now ;

I hae brew'n three pickles o' maut,

And I canna come ilka day to woo—

To woo, to woo, to lilt and to woo,

And I canna come ilka day to woo.

I hae a wee calf that wad fain be a cow—
 Lass, gin ye'll tak me, tell me now ;
 I hae a gryce that wad fain be a sow,
 And I canna come ilka day to woo—
 To woo, to woo, to lilt and to woo,
 And I canna come ilka day to woo.

* * * *

This song appears as a fragment in Herd's Collection, 1776 ; but for the origin of the ditty we have to go back to an early period of the sixteenth century. The people who heard the sermons of Cranmer and Latimer in England, and of Knox in Scotland, were familiar with a droll canticle on the idea of a lover professing to make a great show of small possessions to his sweetheart, and telling her that his time was too valuable to allow of his wooing her every day. The English song about the time of Henry VIII. opened thus :

Joan, quoth John, when will this be ?
 Tell me, when wilt thou marry me,
 My corn, and eke my calf and rents,
 My lands and all my tenements :
 Say, Joan, quoth John, what wilt thou do ?
 I cannot come every day to woo.¹

Some ages later, what appears as the entire song, but probably a good deal modified, was presented in musical publications : as follows, for example, in *Pills to Purge Melancholy*, 1698.

I've corn and hay in the barn hard by,
 And three fat hogs pent up in the sty,
 I have a mare and she is coal-black,
 I ride on her tail to save her back.
 Then say, my Joan, &c.

¹ This little song was printed in Smith's *Musica Antiqua* (1812) as from a manuscript of the above-mentioned reign. The above copy is as it appears more correctly in Rimbault's *Little Book of Songs and Ballads*.

I have a cheese upon the shelf,
 And I cannot eat it all myself ;
 I have three good marks that lie in a rag,
 In the nook of the chimney instead of a bag.
 Then say, my Joan, &c.

To marry I would have thy consent,
 But, faith, I never could compliment ;
 I can say nought but 'Hey, go ho,'
 Words that belong to the cart and the plough.
 Then say, my Joan, wilt that not do ?
 I cannot come every day to woo.

There was also, as early as 1611, a song of seven stanzas, giving the same idea only a little modified, the first verse being :

I have house and land in Kent,
 And if you will love me, love me now ;
 Twopence-halfpenny is my rent ;
 I cannot come every day to woo.¹

These, it will be observed, are English songs ; but there was a Scottish parallel, of which Lord Hailes gave a verse in the notes to his extracts from the Bannatyne Manuscript :

I hae a wee lairdship down in the Merse
 [Lass, gin ye loe me, tell me now],
 The nineteenth part of a goose's grass,
 And I wanna come ilka day to woo.

The nineteenth part of a goose's grass in the Merse would be a very fair counterpart to the twopence-halfpenny rent in Kent.

In the last century, a new version of *I hae laid Three Herrin' in Saut* was produced by James Tytler, very much in the burlesque style of the old verses. It is given with the air in Johnson's *Musical Museum* as follows :

¹ Melesmata, 1617.

The musical score is written on six staves in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. The melody is simple and folk-like, with a mix of eighth and quarter notes. The lyrics are printed below the notes, with some words hyphenated across lines. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

I hae laid a her-ring in saut, Lass, gin ye lo'e me,
 tell me now; I hae brew'd a for-pit o' maut, And I
 canna come il-ka day to woo: I hae a calf that will
 soon be a cow, Lass, gin ye lo'e me, tell me now;
 I hae a stook, and I'll soon hae a mowe, And I
 can-na come il-ka day to woo.

I hae laid a herring in saut—
 Lass, gin ye lo'e me, tell me now;
 I hae brew'd a forpit o' maut,
 And I canna come ilka day to woo:
 I hae a calf that will soon be a cow—
 Lass, gin ye lo'e me, tell me now;
 I hae a stook, and I'll soon hae a mowe,
 And I canna come ilka day to woo:

I hae a house upon yon moor—
 Lass, gin ye lo'e me, tell me now;
 Three sparrows may dance upon the floor,
 And I canna come ilka day to woo:

I hae a but, and I hae a ben—
Lass, gin ye lo'e me, tell me now ;
A penny to keep, and a penny to spen',
And I canna come ilka day to woo :

I hae a hen wi' a happitie-leg—
Lass, gin ye lo'e me, tell me now ;
That ilka day lays me an egg,
And I canna come ilka day to woo :

I hae a cheese upon my skelf—
Lass, gin ye lo'e me, tell me now ;
And soon wi' mites 'twill rin itself,
And I canna come ilka day to woo.

It may be remarked, that the air of *I hae laid a Herrin' in Saüt*, as usually sung in Scotland, is a quick and lively one. As is not uncommon, however, it is susceptible of great tenderness when played slow. Burns's pretty pastoral song, *The Bonnie Blinks of Mary's Ee*, has been of late years sung to this tune in slow time.¹