

## WILLIE WAS A WANTON WAG.

All that is known with certainty of the history of this song, is that it was published in the *Tea-table Miscellany*, with the initials W. W., and reproduced with its lively air in the *Orpheus Caledonius*. As a picture of life-enjoying youth and high animal spirits, it is unsurpassed. There has been a debate about the authorship. It has been set forth, but upon no good authority, that W. W. was William Walkingshaw of that Ilk in Renfrewshire, and Burns had the words 'by Mr Walkingshaw' inserted in the index of Johnson's *Museum*. It appears that there was no William in the family. Mr David Laing expresses his inclination to believe, that by 'W. W.' was meant 'Wanton Willie,' a well-known sobriquet of Lieutenant William Hamilton of Gilbertfield, a friend and correspondent of Allan Ramsay, and who was a copious writer of Scottish verse, though no collection of his poems was ever made. Hamilton died at an advanced age in May 1751.

It will probably appear to most readers a justifiable conjecture, that whoever wrote *Willie was a Wanton Wag*, wrote *Andro and his Cutty Gun* also, if not several other songs giving humorous portraiture of familiar Scottish life, some of which follow.

Wil - lie was a wan - ton wag, The  
blith - est lad that e'er I saw: At  
brid - als still he bore the brag, And

The image shows three staves of musical notation in G major (one flat) and common time (C). The melody is a lively, dance-like tune. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across multiple notes. The first staff ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The second and third staves also end with double bar lines and repeat signs.

car - ried aye the gree a - wa'. His  
 doub - let was of Zet - land shag, And  
 wow but Wil - lie he was brow; And  
 at his shou - thers hung a tag That  
 pleased the lass - es best of a'.

Willie was a wanton wag,  
 The blithest lad that e'er I saw :  
 At bridals still he bore the brag,  
 And carried aye the gree awa'.  
 His doublet was of Zetland shag,  
 And wow but Willie he was brow ;  
 And at his shouthers hung a tag  
 That pleased the lasses best of a'.

Ee was a man without a clag ;  
 His heart was frank, without a flaw ;  
 And aye whatever Willie said,  
 It still was hadden as a law.  
 His boots they were made of the jag,  
 When he went to the weapon-shaw ;  
 Upon the green nane durst him brag,  
 The fient a ane among them a'.

And was not Willie weel worth gowd ?  
 He wan the love o' grit and sma' ;  
 For, after he the bride had kiss'd,  
 He kiss'd the lasses haill-sale a'.  
 Sae merrily round the ring they row'd,  
 When by the hand he led them a' ;  
 And smack on smack on them bestow'd,  
 By virtue of a standing law.

And was na Willie a great loun,  
 As shyre a lick as e'er was seen ?  
 When he danced with the lasses round,  
 The bridegroom spier'd where he had been.  
 Quoth Willie, I've been at the ring ;  
 Wi' bobbin', faith, my shanks are sair ;  
 Gae ca' the bride and maidens in,  
 For Willie he dow do na mair.

Then rest ye, Willie, I'll gae out,  
 And for a wee fill up the ring ;  
 But shame licht on his souple snout !  
 He wanted Willie's wanton fling.  
 Then straight he to the bride did fare,  
 Says weel's me on your bonnie face !  
 With bobbin' Willie's shanks are sair,  
 And I am come to fill his place.

Bridegroom, says she, you'll spoil the dance,  
 And at the ring you'll aye be lag,  
 Unless like Willie ye advance ;  
 Oh, Willie has a wanton leg !  
 For wi' 't he learns us a' to steer,  
 And foremost aye bears up the ring ;  
 We will find nae sic dancin' here,  
 If we want Willie's wanton fling.