

# BLINK OVER THE BURN, SWEET BETTY.

The musical score is written on five staves in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 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 final line of the score ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Blink ov - er the burn, sweet Bet - ty, It  
 is a cauld win - ter night; It  
 rains, it hails, and it thunders, The  
 moon she gi'es nae light: It's a' for the  
 sake o' sweet Betty, That ev - er I tint my

<sup>1</sup> This last line is substituted from an old nurse's copy, for one less delicate and pathetic, which has always hitherto been printed. The song appeared first in the *Tea-table Miscellany*, marked with the signature Z, indicating that the editor did not know its age.



way; O lassie [gie me some shel-ter] Un-  
til it be break o' day.

Blink over the burn, sweet Betty,  
 It is a cauld winter night ;  
 It rains, it hails, and it thunders,  
 The moon she gi'es nae light :  
 It's a' for the sake o' sweet Betty,  
 That ever I tint my way ;  
 O lassie [gie me some shelter]  
 Until it be break o' day.

O Betty shall bake my bread,  
 And Betty shall brew my ale,  
 And Betty shall be my love,  
 When I come over the dale ;  
 Blink over the burn, sweet Betty,  
 Blink over the burn to me ;  
 And while I ha'e life, my dear lassie,  
 My ain sweet Betty thou's be.

There have been songs with some such phrase as 'Blink over the burn, sweet Betty,' for their groundwork, from comparatively an early period. Dr Rimbault traces the expression as far back as the reign of Henry VIII., soon after which it was moralised into a religious parody, beginning :

Come over the burn, Bessy, thou pretty little Bessy,  
 Come over the burn, Bessy, to me ;  
 The burn is this world blind, and Bessy is mankind, &c.

There was also a political parody, in which England hailed the advent of Elizabeth to the throne :

I am thy lover fair, hath chose thee to mine heir,  
And my name is merry England ;  
Therefore come away, and make no more delay,  
Sweet Bessy, give me thy hand.

At what time the idea made its way into Scotland we cannot tell ; but the *Orpheus Caledonius* gives the air, with more than one set of verses. On this occasion, we pass over these refined but dull compositions, and give an old rustic Scotch song in connection with the melody.<sup>1</sup>

In Ritson's *Scottish Songs* (1794) appears the following stanza for *Blink over the Burn, sweet Betty* :

In simmer I mawed my meadow,  
In harvest I shure my corn,  
In winter I married a widow,  
I wish I was free the morn.  
Blink over the burn, sweet Betty,  
Blink over the burn to me ;  
O it is a thousand pities  
But I was a widow for thee !