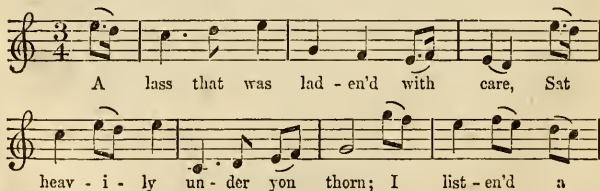


## SAE MERRY AS WE TWA HA'E BEEN !

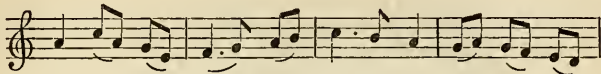
*Sae Merry as We have been* appears as a refrain of old date in our poetical history. It occurs as the name of one of the tunes in the Skene Manuscript, circa 1630—a tune, however, which does not now exist in any such connection. It appears as the title of an air also in Ramsay's *Tea-table Miscellany*, being the melody assigned to a song probably of Ramsay's own, addressed 'to Mrs E. C.,' and beginning, 'Now Phœbus advances on high,' but containing no such phrase or refrain as this in the body of the poem. The phrase is one of those expressions, like 'auld lang syne,' which can never fail to awaken kindly social feelings, and it is not surprising that there should have at length been a song fully developing the idea—one which Burns felt to be 'beautiful'—whose chorus, in particular, he deemed 'truly pathetic'—as follows :<sup>2</sup>



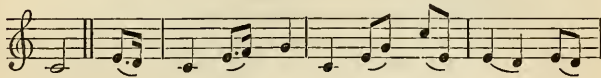
A lass that was lad - en'd with care, Sat  
 heav - i - ly un - der yon thorn; I list - en'd a

<sup>1</sup> *Scottish Ballads and Songs*, Edinburgh, 1859.

<sup>2</sup> This song appeared in Herd's Collection. There is another version, containing a few attempts at improvement, in some later collections.



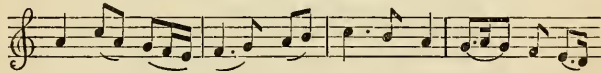
while for to hear, When thus she be - gan for to



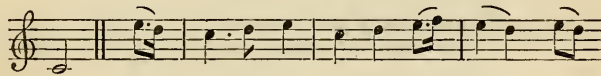
mourn. When - e'er my dear shep - herd was there, The



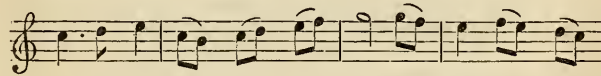
birds did me - lo - dious - ly sing, And cold nip - ping



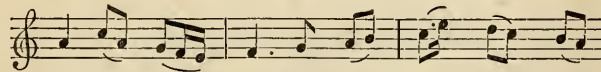
win - ter did wear A face that re - sem - bled the



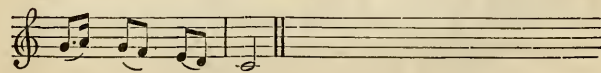
spring. Sae mer - ry as we twa ha'e been, Sae



mer - ry as we twa ha'e been, My heart it is



like for to break When I think on the



days we ha'e seen.

A lass that was laden'd with care,  
 Sat heavily under yon thorn ;  
 I listen'd a while for to hear,  
 When thus she began for to mourn.  
 Whene'er my dear shepherd was there,  
 The birds did melodiously sing,  
 And cold nipping winter did wear  
 A face that resembled the spring.  
 Sae merry as we twa ha'e been,  
 Sae merry as we twa ha'e been,  
 My heart it is like for to break  
 When I think on the days we ha'e seen.

Our flocks feeding close by his side,  
 He gently pressing my hand,  
 I view'd the wide world in its pride,  
 And laugh'd at the pomp of command !  
 My dear, he would oft to me say,  
 What makes you hard-hearted to me ?  
 Oh ! why do you thus turn away,  
 From him who is dying for thee ?

But now he is far from my sight,  
 Perhaps a deceiver may prove,  
 Which makes me lament day and night,  
 That ever I granted my love.  
 At eve, when the rest of the folk  
 Are merrily seated to spin,  
 I set myself under an oak,  
 And heavily sighed for him.

An interesting anecdote connected with this song is given in the Abbé Morellet's *Memoirs*: 'Franklin was very fond of Scotch songs ; he recollected, he said, the strong and agreeable impression which they had made on him. He related to us that, while travelling in America, he found himself beyond the Alleghany Mountains, in the house of a Scotchman, living remote

from society, after the loss of his fortune, with his wife, who had been handsome, and their daughter, fifteen or sixteen years of age ; and that, on a beautiful evening, sitting before their door, the wife had sung the Scotch air *So Merry as We have been*, in so sweet and touching a way that he burst into tears ; and that the recollection of this impression was still vivid, after more than thirty years.'