

BESSY BELL AND MARY GRAY.

O Bes - sy Bell and Ma - ry Gray, They
 are twa bon - nie lass - es; They bigg'd a bower on
 yon burn brae, And theek'd it o'er with rash - es. Fair
 Bes - sy Bell I loo'd yestreen, And thought I ne'er could
 al - ter; But Ma - ry Gray's twa paw - ky een, Gard
 a' my fan - cy fal - ter.

O Bessy Bell and Mary Gray,
 They are twa bonnie lasses;
 They bigg'd a bower on yon burn brae,
 And theek'd it o'er with rashes.
 Fair Bessy Bell I loo'd yestreen,
 And thought I ne'er could alter;
 But Mary Gray's twa pawky een,
 Gard a' my fancy falter.

Now Bessy's hair's like a lint tap,
 She smiles like a May morning,
 When Phœbus starts frae Thetis' lap,
 The hills with rays adorning.
 White is her neck, soft is her hand,
 Her waist and feet fu' genty ;
 With ilka grace she can command
 Her lips ; O wow ! they're dainty.

And Mary's locks are like a crow,
 Her een like diamonds glances ;
 She's aye sae clean, redd up, and braw,
 She kills when'er she dances ;
 Blithe as a kid, with wit at will,
 She blooming, tight, and tall is ;
 And guides her airs sae gracefu' still,
 O Jove ! she's like thy Pallas.

Dear Bessy Bell and Mary Gray,
 Ye unco sair oppress us,
 Our fancies jee between ye twa,
 Ye are sic bonnie lasses.
 Wae's me ! for baith I canna get,
 To ane by law we're stented,
 Then I'll draw cuts, and tak my fate
 And be with ane contented.

This song was composed by Allan Ramsay on the basis of a preceding one, of which he retained only the first four lines. The air, a lively one, is inserted in Playford's Collection, 1700. There is a tradition that the two heroines were the daughters of respectable citizens of Perth, and that on the plague breaking out there, they retired to a rush-thatched cot or bower on the braes of Lednoch, where a lover of one or both visited them occasionally, bringing provisions. Unfortunately he brought also the disease, which cut off both the damsels, and their bodies

were buried together near their cot, on a spot which has been enclosed by a rail.

A fragment of an original ballad on this painful tragedy has been preserved :

They wadna lie in Methven kirkyard,
Amang their gentle kin ;
But they wad lie on Dronach haugh,
To beak fornent the sun.

The discrepancy between the original story of Bessy Bell and Mary Gray, and Ramsay's lively song upon their distracting charms, is not easily to be accounted for.