

## AULD ROBIN GRAY.

This king of all the Scotch ballads had a curious and interesting history. There was an old song of popular extraction, known by its *refrain*, 'The bridegroom grat [that is, wept] when the sun gaed down;' very foolish, but furnished with a pleasing air. An eccentric masculine lady, of great note in Scottish society, named Sophy Johnstone, sang this song to the youthful family of the Earl of Balcarres at Balcarres House, in Fife, and impressed Lady Anne in particular with a deep sense of the beauty of the melody. Soon after the close of the year 1771, Lady Anne, finding herself much alone in the paternal mansion, and rather melancholy, bethought herself of attempting, with such power of verse as she possessed, to compose, to the plaintive tones which had pleased her so much, some little history of virtuous distress in humble life such as might suit them. Taking the name of the old cow-herd of her father's home-farm—Robin Gray—she represented a young maiden as obliged by family misfortunes to accept him for a lover, and as being soon after overwhelmed with grief on the discovery that a youthful sweetheart, supposed to be dead, was still alive. It would appear from a recital of her own, that the ballad did not at first take fully the shape it afterwards bore, for she said one day to her little sister (subsequently Countess of Hardwicke), 'My dear, I have been writing a ballad—I am oppressing my heroine with many misfortunes—I have already sent her Jamie to sea, and broken her father's arm, and made her mother fall sick, and given her auld Robin Gray for a lover; but I wish to load her with a fifth sorrow in the four lines, poor

thing! help me to one, I pray.' 'Steal the cow, sister Anne!' said the little Elizabeth. So the cow was immediately *lifted*, and the ballad completed. It soon got into circulation, without the name of the fair author, which was long a matter of mystery.

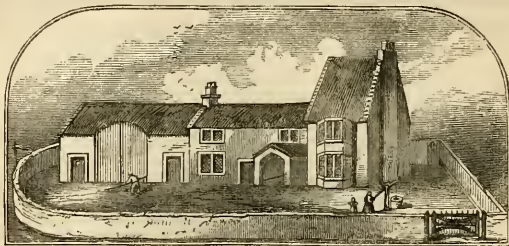


Balcarres.

Lady Anne survived to 1825, and only acknowledged the authorship near the close of her life. She had, in 1793, married Sir Andrew Bernard, librarian to George III., who died in 1807.

Cordial as the reception of this fine song was from the beginning, it could not be said to experience the enthusiastic admiration which it now enjoys, till it was accommodated with a superior melody by the Rev. William Leeves, Rector of Wrington, in Somersetshire, the melody to which it is now invariably sung.

Mr Leeves's melody, not being Scottish, is, of course, only admitted here by sufferance, or for convenience. It seems



Mr Leeves's Cottage, Weston-super-mare.

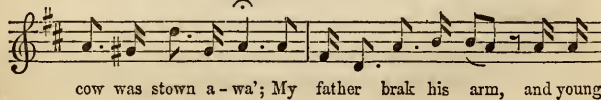
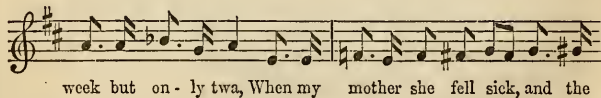
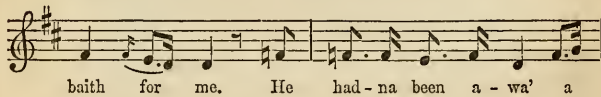
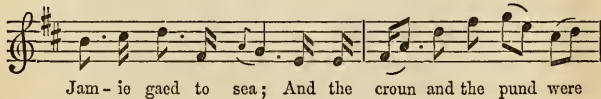
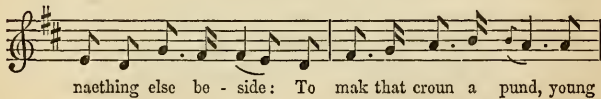
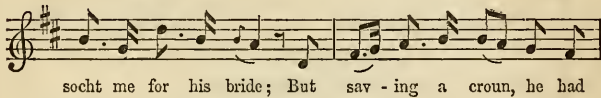
proper that the original Scottish air should be added. It is here transcribed from Johnson's *Museum*:

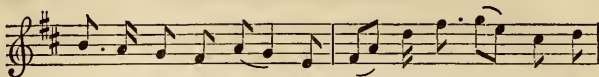
When the sheep are in the fauld, and the  
 kye at hame, And a' the warld to  
 sleep are gane; The waes o' my heart fa' in  
 showers frae my e'e, When my guid-man lies  
 sound by me.

AULD ROBIN GRAY.

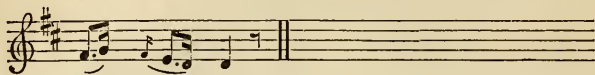
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When the sheep are in the fauld, and the kye at hame,  
 And a' the warld to sleep are gane ;  
 The waes o' my heart fa' in showers frae my e'e,  
 When my guidman lies sound by me.





Jam - ie at the sea, And auld Rob - in Gray cam a -



court - in' me.

Young Jamie loo'd me weil, and socht me for his bride ;  
 But saving a croun, he had naething else beside :  
 To mak that croun a pund, young Jamie gaed to sea ;  
 And the croun and the pund were baith for me.

He hadna been awa' a week but only twa,  
 When my mother she fell sick, and the cow was stown awa' ;  
 My father brak his arm, and young Jamie at the sea,  
 And auld Robin Gray cam a-courtin' me.

My father couldna work, and my mother couldna spin ;  
 I toil'd day and nicht, but their bread I couldna win ;  
 Auld Rob maintain'd them baith, and, wi' tears in his e'e,  
 Said, Jennie, for their sakes, oh, marry me !

My heart it said nay, for I look'd for Jamie back ;  
 But the wind it blew high, and the ship it was a wreck :  
 The ship it was a wreck—why didna Jamie dee ?  
 Or why do I live to say, Wae 's me ?

My father argued sair : my mother didna speak ;  
 But she lookit in my face till my heart was like to break :  
 Sae they gied him my hand, though my heart was in the sea ;  
 And auld Robin Gray was guidman to me.

I hadna been a wife a week but only four,  
 When, sitting sae mournfully at the door,  
 I saw my Jamie's wraith, for I couldna think it he,  
 Till he said, I'm come back for to marry thee.

Oh, sair did we greet, and mickle did we say ;  
 We took but ae kiss, and we tore ourselves away :

I wish I were deid ! but I'm no like to dee ;  
And why do I live to say, Wae's me !

I gang like a ghaist, and I carena to spin ;  
I daurna think on Jamie, for that wad be a sin ;  
But I'll do my best a guid wife to be,  
For auld Robin Gray is kind unto me.

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