THE WIDOW.

The widow can bake, and the widow can brew,
The widow can shape, and the widow can sew,
And mony braw things the widow can do;
  Then have at the widow, my laddie.
With courage attack her, baith early and late,
To kiss her and clap her you manna be blate,
Speak well, and do better, for that's the best gate
  To win a young widow, my laddie.

The widow she's youthfu', and never ae hair
The waur for the wearing, and has a good skair
Of every thing lovely, she's witty and fair,
  And has a rich jointure, my laddie.
What cou'd you wish better your pleasure to crown,
Than a widow, the bonniest toast in the town,
With naething, but draw in your stool and sit down,
  And sport with the widow, my laddie?

Then till 'er, and kill 'er with courtesie dead,
Though stark love and kindness be all ye can plead;
Be heartsome and airy, and hope to succeed
  With a bonny gay widow, my laddie.
Strike iron while 'tis het, if ye'd have it to wald,
For fortune ay favours the active and bauld,
But ruins the wooer that's thowless and cauld,
  Unfit for the widow, my laddie.

There was once an old free song, the burthen of which gives a name to the air to which this song is sung, called "Wap at the widow, my laddie." Allan Ramsay infused a more modest spirit through it, without lessening its unobjectionable attractions; and the song thus renovated in a purer, but still a very free taste, keeps hold of public favour. We have many rude rhymes, and still ruder proverbs, expressive of the ease with which the scruples of a rosy young widow are vanquished; but the song itself says quite enough, and I shall not illustrate the plain and simple text by either rhyme or proverb.

WIDOW, ARE YE WAUKIN?

O wha's that at my chamber-door?
Fair widow, are ye wauking?
Auld carle, your suit give o'er,
Your love lies a' in tauking.
Gi'e me a lad that's young and tight,
Sweet like an April meadow;
'Tis sic as he can bless the sight
And bosom of a widow.

O widow, wilt thou let me in,
I'm pawky, wise, and thrifty,

And come of a right gentle kin,
I'm little mair than fifty.
Daft carle, dit your mouth,
What signifies how pawky,
Or gentle-born ye be,—bot youth?
In love you're but a gawky.

Then, widow, let these guineas speak,
That powerfully plead clinkan,
And if they fail, my mouth I'll steek,
And nae mair love will think on.
These court indeed, I maun confess,
I think they make you young, Sir,
And ten times better can express
Affection, than your tongue, Sir.

In ancient times, an old man assuming the vivacity of youth, and making love to the fair and the blooming, was a prime subject for lyrical mirth; and many a side has been agreeably shaken by the wit and the humour which such a circumstance excited. This is a matter which seems to have afforded Allan Ramsay abundance of amusement, and his poetry bears token in many places that he thought such an unnatural scene as gray age and blooming youth presented was worthy of satire. But he has given to gold the eloquence which I am afraid it will be often found to possess: the stories of those who live in misery, but who dine in silver, might fill a volume. Ramsay found a witty and indelicate old ditty called "Widow, are ye wakin," and

speculating on the idea which it gave, produced this very lively and pleasant song. He calls it "The auld Man's best Argument"—a witty title—but I have chosen to abide by that which gives a name to the air.

THE BRAES OF YARROW.

Busk ye, busk ye, my bonny bonny bride,
Busk ye, busk ye, my winsome marrow,
Busk ye, busk ye, my bonny bonny bride,
And let us leave the braes of Yarrow.

Where got ye that bonny bonny bride,
Where got ye that winsome marrow?
I got her where I durst not well be seen,
Puing the birks on the braes of Yarrow.

Weep not, weep not, my bonny bonny bride,
Weep not, weep not, my winsome marrow,
Nor let thy heart lament to leave
Puing the birks on the braes of Yarrow.

Why does she weep, thy bonny bonny bride?
Why does she weep, thy winsome marrow?
And why dare ye nae mair well be seen
Puing the birks on the braes of Yarrow?

Lang must she weep, lang must she, must she weep,
Lang must she weep with dole and sorrow,
And lang must I nae mair well be seen,
Puing the birks on the braes of Yarrow.

For she has tint her lover, lover dear,
Her lover dear, the cause of sorrow;
And I have slain the comeliest swain,
That ever pu'd birks on the braes of Yarrow.

Why runs thy stream, O Yarrow, Yarrow, red?
Why on thy braes heard the voice of sorrow,
And why yon melancholious weeds,
Hung on the bonny birks of Yarrow?

What's yonder floats on the rueful, rueful flood?
What's yonder floats? O dole and sorrow!
O 'tis the comely swain I slew
Upon the doleful braes of Yarrow.

Wash, O wash his wounds, his wounds in tears,
His wounds in tears of dole and sorrow,
And wrap his limbs in mourning weeds,
And lay him on the braes of Yarrow.

Then build, then build, ye sisters, sisters sad,
Ye sisters sad, his tomb with sorrow,
And weep around in woeful wise,
His helpless fate on the braes of Yarrow.

Curse ye, curse ye, his useless useless shield,
My arm that wrought the deed of sorrow,
The fatal spear that pierc'd his breast,
His comely breast on the braes of Yarrow.

Did I not warn thee not to, not to love,
And warn from fight? but to my sorrow,
Too rashly bold, a stronger arm
Thou mett'st, and fell on the braes of Yarrow.

Sweet smells the birk, green grows, green grows the grass,
Yellow on Yarrow's braes the gowan,
Fair hangs the apple frae the rock,
Sweet the wave of Yarrow flowan.

Flows Yarrow sweet, as sweet, as sweet flows Tweed,
As green its grass, its gowan as yellow,
As sweet smells on its braes the birk,
The apple from its rocks as mellow.

Fair was thy love, fair, fair indeed thy love,
In flow'ry bands thou didst him fetter;
Tho' he was fair, and well belov'd again,
Than me he never lov'd thee better.

Busk ye, then busk, my bonny bonny bride,
Busk ye, then busk, my winsome marrow,
Busk ye, and lo'e me on the banks of Tweed,
And think nae mair on the braes of Yarrow.

How can I busk a bonny bonny bride,
How can I busk a winsome marrow,
How lo'e him on the banks of Tweed,
That slew my love on the braes of Yarrow?

O Yarrow field, may never, never rain,
No dew thy tender blossoms cover,
For there was basely kill'd my love,
My love as he had not been a lover.

The boy put on his robes, his robes of green,
His purple vest, 'twas my ain sewing,
Ah! wretched me, I little, little knew,
He was in these to meet his ruin.

The boy took out his milk-white, milk-white steed,
Unheedful of my dole and sorrow,
But ere the to-fall of the night,
He lay a corpse on the braes of Yarrow.

Much I rejoic'd that woful, woful day;
I sung, my voice the woods returning;
But lang ere night the shaft was flown
That slew my love, and left me mourning.

What can my barbarous, barbarous father do,
But with his cruel rage pursue me?
My lover's blood is on thy hand;
How canst thou, barbarous man, then woo me?

My happy sisters may be, may be proud,
With cruel and ungentle scoffing,
May bid me seek on Yarrow's braes
My lover nailed in his coffin.

My brother Douglas may, he may upbraid,
And strive with threat'ning words to move me;
My lover's blood is on thy hand,
How canst thou ever bid me love thee?

Yes, yes, prepare the bed, the bed of love,
With bridal sheets my body cover,
Unbar, ye bridal maids, the door,
Let in the expected husband-lover.

But who the expected husband, husband is?
His hands, methinks, are bath'd in slaughter.
Ah me! what ghastly spectre's yon,
Comes, in his pale shroud, bleeding after?

Pale as he is, here lay him, lay him down,
O lay his cold head on my pillow;
Take aff, take aff these bridal weeds,
And crown my careful head with willow.

Pale tho' thou art, yet best, yet best belov'd,
O could my warmth to life restore thee;
Yet lie all night between my breasts,
No youth lay ever there before thee.

Pale, pale indeed, O lovely, lovely youth!
Forgive, forgive so foul a slaughter,
And lie all night between my breasts,
No youth shall ever lie there after.

Return, return, O mournful, mournful bride,
Return and dry thy useless sorrow,
Thy lover heeds nought of thy sighs,
He lies a corpse on the braes of Yarrow.

Of this song Mr. Pinkerton says, "It is in very bad taste, and quite unlike the ancient Scottish manner; even inferior to the poorest of the old ballads with this title. His repeated words and lines causing an eternal jingle—his confused narration and affected pathos throw this piece among the rubbish of poetry." I have ever observed, that when Pinkerton pauses a little, gathers himself up, and utters a weighty and deliberate judgment, he is sure to make a mistake. In matters of poetic taste, trust only his hurried glance or his hasty allusion,—when he thinks seriously, he thinks wrong. It is one of the very sweetest and tenderest productions of the Muse.

Among the admirers of the "Braes of Yarrow," let me mention Wordsworth, who in all that relates to taste and genius is well worth as many Pinkertons as could stand between Rydal-mount and Yarrow. He calls it the exquisite ballad of Hamilton; and in his Yarrow Unvisited and Yarrow Visited—poems that would immortalise any stream—his allusions to the song are frequent and flattering. He had a vision of his own—an

image nobler and lovelier which the song had created in his fancy—he saw the stream and said—

And is this Yarrow?—*This* the stream
Of which my fancy cherish'd
So faithfully a waking dream?
An image that hath perish'd!
O! that some minstrel harp were near
To utter notes of gladness,
And chase this silence from the air
That fills my heart with sadness.

MY PEGGY IS A YOUNG THING.

My Peggy is a young thing,
Just enter'd in her teens,
Fair as the day, and sweet as May,
Fair as the day, and always gay.
My Peggy is a young thing,
And I'm not very auld,
Yet well I like to meet her at
The wauking of the fauld.

My Peggy speaks sae sweetly,
Whene'er we meet alane,
I wish nae mair to lay my care,
I wish nae mair of a' that's rare.

My Peggy speaks sae sweetly,
To a' the lave I'm cauld;
But she gars a' my spirits glow
At wauking of the fauld.

My Peggy smiles sae kindly,
Whene'er I whisper love,
That I look down on a' the town,
That I look down upon a crown.
My Peggy smiles sae kindly,
It makes me blyth and bauld,
And naething gi'es me sic delight,
As wauking of the fauld.

My Peggy sings sae saftly,
When on my pipe I play;
By a' the rest it is confess'd,
By a' the rest, that she sings best.
My Peggy sings sae saftly,
And in her sangs are tauld,
With innocence the wale of sense,
At wauking of the fauld.

The songs which Ramsay wrote for his "Gentle Shepherd" are inferior to that fine pastoral; instead of adorning the text, they encumber it. They are, however, so generally known, and so popular through the aid of the drama, that a collection would be reckoned incomplete without them. They echo, and echo faintly, the preceding text; and they have little of the readiness

of language and alacrity of humour, and lyric grace of composition, which distinguish many of Allan's songs. "My Peggy is a young thing" is partly founded on an old song which commences thus—

Will ye ca' in by our town
As ye come frae the fauld.

If the wit and the humour of this ancient lyric were not enclosed with grossness and indelicacy, as a thistle bloom is beset with its prickles, it would be worthy of acceptation in any company.

THE YOUNG LAIRD AND EDINBURGH KATY.

Now wat ye wha I met yestreen,
Coming down the street, my jo?
My mistress in her tartan screen,
Fu' bonny, braw, and sweet, my jo.
My dear, quoth I, thanks to the night,
That never wish'd a lover ill,
Since ye're out of your mither's sight,
Let's take a wauk up to the hill.

O Katy, wiltu' gang wi' me,
And leave the dinsome town a while?

The blossom's sprouting frae the tree,
And a' the simmer's gaun to smile:
The mavis, nightingale, and lark,
The bleating lambs, and whistling hind,
In ilka dale, green, shaw, and park,
Will nourish health, and glad ye'r mind.

Soon as the clear goodman of day
Bends his morning-draught of dew,
We'll gae to some burn-side and play,
And gather flow'rs to busk ye'r brow;
We'll pou the daisies on the green,
The lucken gowans frae the bog:
Between hands now and then we'll lean,
And sport upon the velvet fog.

There's up into a pleasant glen,
A wee piece frae my father's tow'r,
A canny, saft, and flow'ry den,
Which circling birks have form'd a bow'r:
Whene'er the sun grows high and warm,
We'll to the cauler shade remove,
There will I lock thee in mine arm,
And love and kiss, and kiss and love.

Allan Ramsay wrote this very clever and very natural song, and printed it in his collection in 1724. It was composed to take place of an old and licentious lyric of the same name; and it has been so successful, that its impure predecessor has wholly disappeared. There was

a fine free spirit of enjoyment about Ramsay, and his verses exhibit a happy and pleasant mind. The prime of his life, from twenty-five to five and forty, he devoted to poetry: he began when observation came to the aid of fancy, and he desisted when the gravity of years admonished him to turn to more solemn thoughts than merry verse. With him life seems to have glided more felicitously away than with many other poets—he had fortune and favour on his side, and had the good sense to be content.

BESSY BELL AND MARY GRAY.

O Bessy Bell and Mary Gray,
They are twa bonny lassies,
They bigg'd a bower on yon burn-brae,
And theek'd it o'er wi' rashes.
Fair Bessy Bell I loo'd yestreen,
And thought I ne'er could alter;
But Mary Gray's twa pawky een,
They gar 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, saft is her hand,
Her waist and feet's fu' genty;
With ilka grace she can command;
Her lips, O wow! they're dainty.

And Mary's locks are like a craw,
Her een like diamonds' glances;
She's aye sae clean, redd up, and braw,
She kills whene'er she dances:
Blyth 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 you twa,
Ye are sic bonny lasses:
Wae's me! for baith I canna get,
To ane by law we're stented;
Then I'll draw cuts, and take my fate,
And be with ane contented.

The heroines of this song are not so much indebted to Allan Ramsay for their celebrity as to the affecting story which tradition associates with their names. Elizabeth Bell was the daughter of a gentleman in Perthshire, and Mary Gray was the daughter of Gray of Lyndoch. They were intimate friends, and very witty

and very beautiful. When the plague visited Scotland in 1666, they built a bower in a secluded and romantic glen, near Lyndoch, and retiring to the spot, which is yet called "Burnbrae," hoped to survive the contagion. But they fell victims to their affections: they were visited by a young gentleman, either as a friend or admirer; and the plague soon made them occupiers of the same grave. As they were friends in life, so in death they were not divided. The place where they lie buried is enclosed; and their grave is respected by all who sympathise in their mournful story. Lyndoch, where they lie, is the property of Thomas Graham, Lord Lyndoch. Their fate was the subject of an old and pathetic song, of which the following fragment only remains:—

O Bessie Bell and Mary Gray,
They were twa bonnie lasses,
They biggit a bower on yon burn brae,
And theekit it o'er wi' rashes:
They theekit o'er wi' rashes green,
They theekit it o'er wi' heather,
But the pest came frae the burrows town,
And slew them baith thegither.

They thought to lie in Methven kirk,
Amang their noble kin,
But they maun lie on Lyndoch brae,
To beak fornent the sun.

O Bessie Bell and Mary Gray,
They were twa bonnie lasses,
They biggit a bower on yon burn-brae,
And theekit it o'er wi' rashes.

These fine verses were recited to me by Sir Walter Scott.

DOWN THE BURN, DAVIE.

When trees did bud, and fields were green,
And broom bloom'd fair to see;
When Mary was complete fifteen,
And love laugh'd in her eye;
Blyth Davie's blinks her heart did move
To speak her mind thus free,
Gang down the burn, Davie, love,
And I will follow thee.

Now Davie did each lad surpass,
That dwelt on this burn-side,
And Mary was the bonniest lass,
Just meet to be a bride:
Her cheeks were rosy, red, and white,
Her een were bonny blue;
Her looks were like Aurora bright,
Her lips like dropping dew.

As down the burn they took their way,
What tender tales they said!
His cheek to hers he aft did lay,
And with her bosom play'd;
Till baith at length impatient grown
To be mair fully blest,
In yonder vale they lean'd them down;—
Love only saw the rest.

What pass'd, I guess, was harmless play,
And naething sure unmeet;
For, ganging hame, I heard them say,
They lik'd a walk sae sweet;
And that they aften shou'd return
Sic pleasure to renew.
Quoth Mary, love, I like the burn,
And ay shall follow you.

The air to which this song is written is at least an hundred years old; and it is probable that old words, bearing the same name, accompanied the air. The claim which Burns makes for the air, as the composition of David Maigh, keeper of the blood-hounds to Riddell of Tweeddale, has been doubted by Sir Walter Scott in his review of the works of Burns: if the doubt is expressed because of the antiquity of the air, the answer is, that no era is assigned for the existence of this musical borderer, and that his office was one of great antiquity, and has long since ceased. The heroine of the song has been accused of indelicacy in pointing out a

pleasant walk for her lover; and the words which express their happiness and their love have been called overwarm and indiscreet. But no one has successfully moderated the warmth or lessened the indiscretion. It is the composition of Crauford, and was printed in Ramsay's collection, and in every collection since, and so may it continue.

THE LAST TIME I CAME O'ER THE MOOR.

The last time I came o'er the moor,
I left my love behind me.
Ye powers! what pain do I endure,
When soft ideas mind me!
Soon as the ruddy morn display'd
The beaming day ensuing,
I met betimes my lovely maid
In fit retreats for wooing.

Beneath the cooling shade we lay,
Gazing and chastly sporting;
We kiss'd and promis'd time away,
Till night spread her black curtain.
I pitied all beneath the skies,
Ev'n kings when she was nigh me;
In raptures I beheld her eyes,
Which could but ill deny me.

Shou'd I be call'd where cannons roar,
Where mortal steel may wound me;
Or cast upon some foreign shore,
Where dangers may surround me:
Yet hopes again to see my love,
To feast on glowing kisses,
Shall make my cares at distance move,
In prospect of such blisses.

In all my soul there's not one place
To let a rival enter:
Since she excels in every grace,
In her my love shall center.
Sooner the seas shall cease to flow,
Their waves the Alps shall cover,
On Greenland ice shall roses grow,
Before I cease to love her.

The next time I go o'er the moor,
She shall a lover find me;
And that my faith is firm and pure,
Tho' I left her behind me;
Then Hymen's sacred bonds shall chain
My heart to her fair bosom,
There, while my being does remain,
My love more fresh shall blossom.

Of this song Burns says, "The first lines of 'The last time I came o'er the moor,' and several other lines in it, are beautiful: but, in my opinion—pardon me,

revered shade of Ramsay—the song is unworthy of the divine air. I shall try to make or mend." He afterwards said, "'The last time I came o'er the moor' I cannot meddle with as to mending it; and the musical world have been so long accustomed to Ramsay's words, that a different song, though positively superior, would not be so well received." And when a less gifted versifier altered the song, he interposed and observed, "I cannot approve of taking such liberties with an author as Mr. W. proposes. Let a poet if he chooses take up the idea of another, and work it into a piece of his own, but to mangle the works of the poor bard, whose tuneful tongue is now mute for ever in the dark and narrow house—by heaven, it would be sacrilege! I grant that Mr. W.'s version is an improvement; but let him mend the song as the highlander mended his gun—he gave it a new stock, a new lock, and a new barrel."

I neither wholly agree with the censure which Burns passes on the song, nor do I concur in the rule which he lays down concerning the songs of others. He took many liberties himself; and we owe to the aid or the inspiration of old verses many of the most exquisite of his own lyrics: he borrowed whole stanzas, and altered others without acknowledgment or apology, and confesses to a friend, that "The songs marked 'Z' in the Museum I have given to the world as old verses to their respective tunes; but in fact, of a good many of them, little more than the chorus is ancient—though there is no reason for telling any body this piece of intelligence." In a letter to Lord Woodhouselee, inclosing a

few reliques of west country song, he says—"I had once a great many of these fragments, and some of these here entire; but as I had no idea that any body cared for them, I have forgotten them. I invariably hold it a sacrilege to add any thing of my own to help out with the shattered wrecks of these venerable old compositions; but they have many various readings."

THE LASS OF PATIE'S MILL.

The lass of Patie's mill,
Sae bonnie, blithe, and gay,
In spite of all my skill,
She stole my heart away.
When tedding out the hay,
Bareheaded on the green,
Love 'midst her locks did play,
And wanton'd in her een.

Her arms white, round, and smooth;
Breasts rising in their dawn;
To age it would give youth,
To press them with his han'.
Through all my spirits ran
An ecstacy of bliss,
When I such sweetness fand
Wrapt in a balmy kiss.

Without the help of art,
Like flow'rs which grace the wild,
Her sweets she did impart,
Whene'er she spoke or smil'd:
Her looks they were so mild,
Free from affected pride,
She me to love beguil'd;—
I wish'd her for my bride.

O! had I a' the wealth
Hopetoun's high mountains fill,
Insur'd long life and health,
And pleasure at my will;
I'd promise, and fulfil,
That none but bonnie she,
The lass of Patie's mill,
Should share the same with me.

There is perhaps less originality in song than in any other kind of composition. Many of the most beautiful of our modern lyrics we owe rather to an ancient than a modern impulse. Allan Ramsay's "Lass of Patie's mill" is the renovation of an older song; but how much of the beauty of the new we owe to the charms of the old, I have not heard. Sir William Cunningham, of Robertland, informed Burns on the authority of the Earl of Loudon, that Ramsay was struck with the appearance of a beautiful country girl, at a place called Patie's Mill, near New-mills; and under the influence of her charms composed this song, which he recited at

Loudon Castle. The omission of the second verse was proposed by Mr. Thomson, and in a moment of unexampled fastidiousness, sanctioned by Burns. I have restored the verse, which, though free and glowing, bears the character and impress of that age; and the removal of it picks the heart and soul out of the song.

JOHN HAY'S BONNY LASSIE.

By smooth winding Tay a swain was reclining,
Aft cry'd he, Oh hey! maun I still live pining
Mysel thus away, and daurna discover
To my bonny Hay that I am her lover!

Nae mair it will hide, the flame waxes stranger;
If she's not my bride, my days are nae langer:
Then I'll take a heart, and try at a venture,
Maybe, ere we part, my vows may content her.

She's fresh as the Spring, and sweet as Aurora,
When birds mount and sing, bidding day a good-morrow;
The swaird of the mead, enamell'd wi' daisies,
Looks wither'd and dead when twinn'd of her graces.

But if she appear where verdure invites her,
The fountains run clear, and flowers smell the sweeter;
'Tis heaven to be by when her wit is a-flowing,
Her smiles and bright eye set my spirits a-glowing.

The mair that I gaze, the deeper I'm wounded,
Struck dumb wi' amaze, my mind is confounded;
I'm a' in a fire, dear maid, to caress ye,
For a' my desire is Hay's bonnie lassie.

An old and a very beautiful song once existed in Nithsdale, which was sung to the air of this lyric: I only heard it once; I was then very young, and it has escaped wholly from my memory, except a single line, with which I think the first and last verses concluded—

There's nane o' them a' like my bonnie lassie.

The story of the song was also the same; and I have an impression that the whole or part of it was older than Ramsay's days. Burns had heard that John Hay's Bonnie Lassie was daughter of the Earl or Marquis of Tweeddale, and Countess of Roxburgh, who died some time between the years 1720 and 1740. If the song was Ramsay's, and it has been generally attributed to him, and frequently printed with his name, it must have been an early production, for the lady, if Burns is right, was too ripe for the freshness of Aurora when he printed his Miscellany. But we cannot depend upon traditional accuracy in such matters; and it may have happened that the song was inspired by a much less lordly personage than an earl's daughter and an earl's wife.

GIN YE MEET A BONNIE LASSIE.

Gin ye meet a bonnie lassie,
Gi'e her a kiss and let her gae;
But if ye meet a dorty hizzie,
Fy gar rub her o'er wi' strae.
Be sure ye dinna quat the grip
Of ilka joy when ye are young,
Before auld age your vitals nip,
And lay you twafald o'er a rung.

Sweet youth's a blythe and heartsome time;
Then, lads and lasses, while 'tis May
Gae pu' the gowan in its prime,
Before it wither and decay.
Watch the saft minutes of delyte,
When Jenny speaks beneath her breath,
And kisses, laying a' the wyte
On you, if she kepp ony skaith.

Haith ye're ill-bred, she'll smiling say,
Ye'll worry me, ye greedy rook!
Syne frae your arms she'll rin away,
And hide hersel' in some dark nook.
Her laugh will lead you to the place
Where lies the happiness ye want,
And plainly tell you to your face,
Nineteen nae-says are half a grant.

Now to her heaving bosom cling,
And sweetly toolie for a kiss:
Frae her fair finger whup a ring
As tauken of a future bliss.
These bennisons, I'm very sure,
Are a' o' heaven's indulgent grant;
Then surly carles whisht, forbear
To plague us wi' your whining cant.

The poem out of which this song has been extracted, is described by Lord Woodhouselee as one of the most fortunate efforts of the genius of Allan Ramsay. It is a Scottish version of part of the ninth ode of Horace, but I have heard that the native ease surpasses far the scholastic fidelity. It unites great lyric beauty with a vivacity and a graphic accuracy of painting, which terminate only with the composition. Few hearts could refrain from dilating on a winter day, at the prospect of personal comfort and social pleasure which the poet prepares:

Then fling on coals, and rype the ribs,
And beak the house baith butt and ben;
That mutchkin stoup it hauds but dribs,
Then let's get in the tappit hen.

The first four lines are old, and their spirit has not been conducted very gently into the body of the song. We see at once that they fail to mingle with the rest in that harmonious manner which a song struck off at a heat will always do. After hearing the starting lines sung, we expect a different strain to follow.

GENTY TIBBY AND SONSY NELLY.

Tibby has a store o' charms,
Her genty shape our fancy warms;
How strangely can her sma' white arms
  Fetter the lad who looks but at her!
Fra 'er ancle to her slender waist,
  These sweets conceal'd invite to daute her;
Her rosy cheek, and rising breast,
  Gar ane's mouth gush bout fu' o' water.

Nelly's gawsy, saft, and gay,
Fresh as the lucken flowers in May;
Ilk ane that sees her cries, Ah hey,
  She's bonny! O I wonder at her!
The dimples of her chin and cheek,
  And limbs sae plump invite to daute her;
Her lips sae sweet, and skin sae sleek,
  Gar mony mouths beside mine water.

Now strike my finger in a bore,
My wyson with the Maiden shore,
Gin I can tell whilk I am for
  When these twa stars appear thegither:
O love! why dost thou gi'e thy fires
  Sae large, while we're oblig'd to nither
Our spacious sauls' immense desires,
  And ay be in a hankerin swither?

Tibby's shape and airs are fine,
And Nelly's beauties are divine:
But since they canna baith be mine,
Ye gods, give ear to my petition;
Provide a good lad for the tane,
But let it be with this provision,
I get the other to my lane,
In prospect plano and fruition.

When Allan Ramsay wrote this song, he ought in prudence to have read to his Muse the obligation under which he had laid her in his preface, of being remarkably staid and sedate. She is indeed "a leaper and a dancer," but she leaps as high as an opera girl here, and seems equally unconscious of offending the devout eyes of those for whose pleasure she is moving. With all its failings this is a lively buoyant song: the indecision of the lover, and the hankering swither in which two beauties keep him, is well imagined. One of the lines requires illustration.

My wyson with the maiden shore.

That is—though you threaten to behead him with the Earl of Morton's engine of death, the Maiden, he should not be able to tell which of them he would take. The preceding line probably alludes to those noted instruments of torture, the "thumbikins;" of which King William said, when they were applied to his royal thumbs, "They would make me confess any thing!"

THE COLLIER'S BONNY LASSIE.

The collier has a daughter,
And O she's wondrous bonny;
A laird he was that sought her,
Rich baith in lands and money:
The tutors watch'd the motion
Of this young honest lover;
But love is like the ocean—
Wha can its depth discover!

He had the art to please ye,
And was by a' respected;
His airs sat round him easy,
Genteel but unaffected.
The collier's bonny lassie,
Fair as the new-blown lily,
Aye sweet, and never saucy,
Secur'd the heart of Willie.

He lov'd beyond expression
The charms that were about her,
And panted for possession;
His life was dull without her.
After mature resolving,
Close to his breast he held her;

In saftest flames dissolving,
He tenderly thus tell'd her:

My bonnie collier's daughter,
Let naething discompose ye,
'Tis no your scanty tocher
Shall ever gar me lose ye:
For I have gear in plenty,
And love says, 'tis my duty
To ware what heaven has lent me,
Upon your wit and beauty.

The Collier's Bonnie Lassie was a girl of some naiveté; but though Allan Ramsay has given us a good song, I am not sure that his verses have that kind of fresh original hue which belongs to the old:—

The Collier has a daughter,
She's black, but O she's bonnie;
A laird he was that loved her,
Rich both in lands and money.
I'm o'er young to wed the laird,
And o'er black to be a lady;
But I will has a collier lad,
The colour o' my daddie.

The collier has a daughter,
I vow she's wond'rous pretty;
The collier has a daughter,
She's black—but O, she's witty!

He shawed her gowd in gowpins,
And she answered him fu' ready;
The lad I love works under ground,
The colour o' my daddie.

Such is the song which I have heard sung as the old words.

AH THE POOR SHEPHERD'S MOURNFUL FATE.

Ah the poor shepherd's mournful fate,
When doom'd to love, and doom'd to languish,
To bear the scornful fair one's hate,
Nor dare disclose his anguish!
Yet eager looks, and dying sighs,
My secret soul discover;
While rapture, trembling through mine eyes,
Reveals how much I love her.
The tender glance, the reddening cheek,
O'erspread with rising blushes,
A thousand various ways they speak
A thousand various wishes.

For, oh! that form so heavenly fair,
Those languid eyes so sweetly smiling,
That artless blush, and modest air,
So fatally beguiling!

Thy every look, and every grace,
So charm whene'er I view thee,
Till death o'ertake me in the chase
Still will my hopes pursue thee:
Then when my tedious hours are past,
Be this last blessing given,
Low at thy feet to breathe my last,
And die in sight of heaven.

This is one of the most elegant and beautiful songs in the language. It was written by Hamilton of Bangour; but so little has its charms been felt in England, that Dr. Johnson would not allow it to be poetry, because "blushes" and "wishes" were not corresponding rhymes, and Dr. Aikin published it as the production of an Englishman, without knowing the author. Burns says, the old name was "Sour plums of Galloshiels," and that the piper of the laird of Galloshiels composed the air about the year 1700. The old words have been entirely silenced by this fine song; and with regard to the piper's claim upon the air, I have not observed that Hamilton, in his poem of the Fair Maid of Galloshiels, mentions the genius of the piper for original composition. I have, it is true, only seen a portion of the poem, which records a contest between a fiddler and a piper for the maid of Galloshiels, of which the lady herself, with a manifest violation of equity, is made sole judge. The description of the bagpipe made by Glenderule is exquisite, and in the true Homeric style, where all is painted for the eye.

THE BUSH ABOON TRAQUAIR.

Hear me, ye nymphs, and every swain,
I'll tell how Peggy grieves me;
Tho' thus I languish, thus complain,
Alas! she ne'er believes me.
My vows and sighs, like silent air,
Unheeded never move her;
At the bonny bush aboon Traquair,
'Twas there I first did love her.

That day she smiled, and made me glad,
No maid seem'd ever kinder;
I thought myself the luckiest lad,
So sweetly there to find her.
I tried to soothe my amorous flame
In words that I thought tender;
If more there pass'd, I'm not to blame,
I meant not to offend her.

Yet now she scornful flees the plain,
The fields we then frequented;
If e'er we meet, she shows disdain,
She looks as ne'er acquainted.
The bonny bush bloom'd fair in May,
Its sweets I'll ay remember;
But now her frowns make it decay,
It fades as in December.

Ye rural powers, who hear my strains,
Why thus should Peggy grieve me?
Oh! make her partner in my pains,
Then let her smiles relieve me.
If not, my love will turn despair,
My passion no more tender,
I'll leave the bush aboon Traquair,
To lonely wilds I'll wander.

This song is supposed to have supplied the place of an ancient one with the same name, of which no reliques remain. Burns visited the Bush in the year 1787, when he made a pilgrimage to various places celebrated in story and in song, and found it composed of eight or nine ragged birches. The Bush grows on a rising ground overlooking the old mansion of Traquair and the stream of Tweed. It has lately paid a heavy tax to human curiosity, and has supplied snuff-boxes, and I have heard princes, with "specimens" in the shape of snuff-boxes and other toys. The Earl of Traquair, in anticipation perhaps of this rage for reliques, planted what he called "The New Bush," but it remains unconsecrated in song, and can never inherit the fame or share in the honours of the old. The song is by Crawford.

TWEEDSIDE.

What beauties does Flora disclose!
How sweet are her smiles upon Tweed!
Yet Mary's, still sweeter than those,
Both nature and fancy exceed.
Nor daisy, nor sweet-blushing rose,
Not all the gay flowers of the field,
Not Tweed gliding gently through those,
Such beauty and pleasure does yield.

The warblers are heard in the grove,
The linnet, the lark, and the thrush,
The blackbird, and sweet-cooing dove,
With music enchant ev'ry bush.
Come, let us go forth to the mead,
Let us see how the primroses spring;
We'll lodge in some village on Tweed,
And love while the feather'd folks sing.

How does my love pass the long day?
Does Mary not tend a few sheep?
Do they never carelessly stray,
While happily she lies asleep?
Tweed's murmurs should lull her to rest;
Kind nature indulging my bliss,
To relieve the soft pains of my breast,
I'd steal an ambrosial kiss.

'Tis she does the virgins excel,
No beauty with her may compare;
Love's graces all round her do dwell,
She's fairest, where thousands are fair.
Say, charmer, where do thy flocks stray?
Oh! tell me at noon where they feed?
Shall I seek them on sweet winding Tay,
Or the pleasanter banks of the Tweed?

Tweed-side is a song overflowing with gentleness and beauty: but all who are lovers of nature and simplicity wish Flora resolved into the influence which awakens the flowers, or into any other blameless figure of speech. Burns praises it for its pastoral sweetness and truth, and says the heroine was Mary Stuart, of the Castlemilk family. Family vanity is gratified with the story that one of its number had charms capable of inspiring a song so beautiful; and where we have no surer guide to truth than vanity, we must be content to be no wiser than common fame will allow us. Burns, in saying what he has said, adhered to tradition. The honour of inspiring the song has also been claimed for Mary Scott, the beautiful daughter of Scott of Harden, by one who seldom errs: yet a Dumfriesshire tradition is as good as one of Selkirkshire, and I must own that I feel disposed to ascribe it to the influence of the lady of my native county.—It is one of Crawford's best songs.

BONNIE CHIRSTY.

How sweetly smells the simmer green!
Sweet taste the peach and cherry:
Painting and order please our e'en,
And claret makes us merry:
But finest colours, fruits and flowers,
And wine, though I be thirsty,
Lose a' their charms, and weaker powers,
Compar'd with those of Chirsty.

When wandering o'er the flowery park,
No natural beauty wanting,
How lightsome 'tis to hear the lark,
And birds in concert chanting!
But if my Chirsty tunes her voice,
I'm rapt in admiration;
My thoughts with ecstasies rejoice,
And drap the hale creation.

Whene'er she smiles a kindly glance,
I take the happy omen,
And aften mint to make advance,
Hoping she'll prove a woman;
But dubious of my ain desert,
My sentiments I smother;
With secret sighs I vex my heart,
For fear she love another.

Thus sang blate Edie by a burn,
His Chirsty did o'erhear him;
She doughtna let her lover mourn,
But ere he wist drew near him.
She spake her favour by a look,
Which left nae room to doubt her:
He wisely this white minute took,
And flang his arms about her.

My Chirsty!——witness, bonnie stream,
Sic joy frae tears arising!
I wish this may na be a dream
O love the most surprising!
Time was too precious now for tauk;
This point of a' his wishes
He wadna wi' set speeches bauk,
But wared it a' on kisses.

Ramsay certainly thought very favourably of this song when he placed it foremost in his collection; and though he has written some more fortunate songs, I think its beauty and truth justify his choice. It appears, from the Orpheus Caledonius, that old words once existed for the air to which this song is sung, and with the same name which Ramsay has retained. These words are irrecoverably lost, and we are unable to learn how much of the new song we may owe to the inspiration of the old. This circumstance certainly casts some doubt on the tradition, which says the heroine of this song was Christina, daughter of Dundas of Arniston.

WILLIAM AND MARGARET.

When all was wrapt in dark midnight,
And all were fast asleep,
In glided Margaret's grimly ghost,
And stood at William's feet.

Her face was like an April morn
Clad in a wintry cloud;
And clay-cold was her lily hand
That held her sable shroud.

So shall the fairest face appear
When youth and years are flown;
Such is the robe that kings must wear
When death has reft their crown.

Her bloom was like the springing flow'r
That sips the silver dew;
The rose was budded in her cheek,
Just op'ning to the view.

But love had, like the canker-worm,
Consum'd her early prime:
The rose grew pale, and left her cheek;
She died before her time.

Awake!—she cried, thy true-love calls,
Come from her midnight grave;
Now let thy pity hear the maid
Thy love refused to save.

This is the dumb and dreary hour
When injured ghosts complain,
And yawning graves give up their dead,
To haunt the faithless swain.

Bethink thee, William, of thy fault,
Thy pledge and broken oath;
And give me back my maiden vow,
And give me back my troth.

Why did you promise love to me,
And not that promise keep?
Why said you that my eyes were bright,
Yet leave those eyes to weep?

How could you say my face was fair,
And yet that face forsake?
How could you win my virgin-heart,
Yet leave that heart to break?

How could you swear my lip was sweet,
And made the scarlet pale?
And why did I, young witless maid,
Believe the flatt'ring tale?

That face, alas! no more is fair,
These lips no longer red;
Dark are my eyes, now clos'd in death,
And ev'ry charm is fled.

The hungry worm my sister is;
This winding-sheet I wear:

And cold and weary lasts our night,
Till that last morn appear.

But hark!—the cock has warn'd me hence;
A long and late adieu!
Come see, false man, how low she lies
That died for love of you.

The lark sung out, the morning smiled,
With beams of rosy red;
Pale William quaked in ev'ry limb,
And, raving, left his bed.

He hied him to the fatal place
Where Margaret's body lay,
And stretch'd him on the green grass turf
That wrapt her breathless clay.

And thrice he call'd on Margaret's name,
And thrice he wept full sore:
Then laid his cheek on her cold grave,
And word spoke never more.

There is little doubt that Mallet saw more of the ancient ballad of Fair Margaret and Sweet William than he was willing to admit; and that he imitated the story of Sweet William's Ghost in this exquisite ballad. The resemblance is far too close to be accidental; yet he acknowledges acquaintance only with the following six lines woven into the drama of the Knight of the Burning Pestle:

You are no love for me, Margaret,
I am no love for you.

. . . . . .

When it was grown to dark midnight,
And all were fast asleep,
In came Margaret's grimly ghost,
And stood at William's feet.

"These lines," says Mallet, "naked of ornament and simple as they are, struck my fancy; and bringing fresh into my mind an unhappy adventure much talked of formerly, gave birth to the following poem, which was written many years ago." Several attempts have been made to alter and improve this exquisite production, but the superior beauty and simplicity of the original copy secure it against all corruption.

WHY HANGS THAT CLOUD?

Why hangs that cloud upon thy brow,
That beauteous heav'n, erewhile serene?
Whence do these storms and tempests flow,
What may this gust of passion mean?
And must then mankind lose that light
Which in thine eyes was wont to shine,
And lie obscure in endless night,
For each poor silly speech of mine?

Dear maid, how can I wrong thy name,
Since 'tis acknowledged, at all hands,

That could ill tongues abuse thy fame,
Thy beauty can make large amends:
Or if I durst profanely try
Thy beauty's pow'rful charms t' upbraid,
Thy virtue well might give the lie,
Nor call thy beauty to its aid.

For Venus, every heart t' ensnare,
With all her charms has deck'd thy face,
And Pallas, with unusual care,
Bids wisdom heighten every grace.
Who can the double pain endure?
Or who must not resign the field
To thee, celestial maid, secure
With Cupid's bow, and Pallas' shield?

If then to thee such pow'r is given,
Let not a wretch in torment live,
But smile, and learn to copy Heaven,
Since we must sin ere it forgive.
Yet pitying Heaven not only does
Forgive th' offender and th' offence,
But even itself appeas'd bestows,
As the reward of penitence.

None of our early lyric poets pays such graceful and elegant compliments to the ladies as the author of this song, Hamilton of Bangour. The last verse has been often imitated, and often plundered. Mrs. S. H. was a fortunate lady in taking offence at something which the poet had said to her, since it was atoned for by such a

beautiful and courtly apology. Tradition has neglected to tell us her name, but it is likely she was a Hamilton. I see by the copy which Allan Ramsay published, that the words were written for an old air which bore the name of a song, long since lost, called "Halloween." It is in this way that we are made acquainted with the names of many of our ancient lyrics.

AS SYLVIA IN A FOREST LAY.

As Sylvia in a forest lay,
To vent her woe alone;
Her swain Sylvander came that way,
And heard her dying moan:
Ah! is my love, she said, to you
So worthless and so vain?
Why is your wonted fondness now
Converted to disdain?

You vow'd the light should darkness turn,
Ere you'd forget your love;
In shades now may creation mourn,
Since you unfaithful prove.
Was it for this I credit gave
To ev'ry oath you swore?
But ah! it seems they most deceive
Who most our charms adore.

'Tis plain your drift was all deceit,
The practice of mankind:
Alas! I see it, but too late,
My love had made me blind.
For you, delighted I could die:
But oh! with grief I'm fill'd,
To think that credulous, constant, I
Should by yourself be kill'd.

This said—all breathless, sick, and pale,
Her head upon her hand,
She found her vital spirits fail,
And senses at a stand.
Sylvander then began to melt:
But ere the word was given,
The heavy hand of death she felt,
And sigh'd her soul to heaven.

These verses are by David Mallet, and are copied from Ramsay's collection. They have never been very popular, though Oswald assisted them with his music: indeed the peasantry, to whose fondness for song we owe many of our most admired compositions, would hesitate to share their sympathy with Sylvia and Sylvander. Something of the author of William and Margaret may be observed in the second verse; but no other part equals the delicacy and pathos of that popular composition. Allan Ramsay printed them to the tune of Pinky House, or Rothes's Lament.

WERE NA MY HEART LIGHT I WAD DIE.

There was ance a May, and she lo'ed nae men,
She biggit her bonnie bower down in yon glen;
But now she cries dool and weel-a-day,
Come down the green gate, and come here away.

When bonnie young Johnie came over the sea,
He vow'd he saw naething sae lovely as me;
He gae me gowd rings, and mony braw things—
And were na my heart light I wad die.

His wee wilfu' tittie she loved na me;
I was taller, and twice as bonnie as she;
She raised sic a pother 'tween him and his mother,
That were na my heart light I wad die.

The day it was set for the bridal to be,
The wife took a dwam and lay down to die;
She main'd and she grain'd, wi' fause dolour and pain,
Till he vow'd that he never would see me again.

His kindred sought ane of a higher degree—
Said, Wad he wed ane that was landless, like me?
Albeit I was bonnie, I was nae worth Johnie—
And were na my heart light I wad die.

They said I had neither a cow nor calf,
Nor dribbles o' drink coming through the draff,

Nor pickles o' meal running frae the mill ee—
And were na my heart light I wad die.

My lover he met me ance on the lea,
His tittie was wi' him, and hame ran she;
His mither came out wi' a shriek and a shout—
And were na my heart light I wad die.

His bonnet stood then fu' fair on his brow—
His auld ane look'd better than mony ane's new;
But now he lets 't wear ony way it will hing,
And casts himself dowie upon the corn bing.

And now he gaes daunering about the dykes,
And a' he dow do is to hound the tykes;
The live-lang night he ne'er steeks his ee—
And were na my heart light I wad die.

O were we young now as we ance hae been,
We should hae been galloping down on yon green,
And linking it o'er the lily-white lea—
And were na my heart light I wad die.

To Lady Grissell Baillie, daughter of the Earl of Marchmont, we owe this popular song; but I have never heard from what impulse, whether of truth or speculation, we obtained it. It is very original, very characteristic, and very unequal. I imagine the title is old, but I have never seen any verses which seemed to correspond with the sentiment. It was printed in Allan

Ramsay's collection, and from the place which it obtained, I conclude that Allan was more than half advanced with his work before he received it. There is a curious mixture of naïveté and simplicity, of smartness of remark and lively painting, from beginning to end of the song. Public attention has lately been called to the conduct of this admirable lady by the publication of her family history—she shines as a wife and a daughter, as well as a poetess.

MYRA.

O thou, whose tender serious eyes
  Expressive speak the mind I love;
The gentle azure of the skies,
  The pensive shadows of the grove:
O, mix their bounteous beams with mine,
  And let us interchange our hearts;
Let all their sweetness on me shine,
  Pour'd through my soul be all their darts!

Ah! 'tis too much, I cannot bear
  At once so soft, so keen a ray;
In pity, then, my lovely fair,
  O turn those killing eyes away!
But what avails it to conceal
  One charm, where nought but charms I see!
Their lustre then again reveal,
  And let me, Myra, die of thee.

Thomson, with a prudence which few of the children of the Muse regard, was ever looking forward to some sunny moment when Fortune would equal his merit by her bounty. In his songs he protects himself from the immediate consequences of unguarded expressions, by complaining of her injustice:—

'Tis mine, alas! to mourn my wretched fate,
I love a maid who all my bosom charms,
Yet lose my days without this lovely mate,
Inhuman Fortune keeps her from mine arms.

His love was of a gentle and considerate kind. He never was so much enraptured as to forget he was poor. Myra's beauty excelled her good name.

NOW PHŒBUS ADVANCES ON HIGH.

Now Phœbus advances on high,
Nae footsteps of winter are seen,
The birds carol sweet in the sky,
And lambkins dance reels on the green.
Through plantings, and burnies sae clear,
We wander for pleasure and health,
Where buddings and blossoms appear,
With prospects of joy and of wealth.

Go view the gay scenes all around,
That are, and that promise to be;
Yet in them a' naething is found
Sae perfect, Eliza, as thee.
Thy een the clear fountains excel,
Thy locks they outrival the grove;
When zephyrs thus pleasingly swell,
Ilk wave makes a captive to love.

The roses and lilies combin'd,
And flowers of maist delicate hue,
By thy cheek and dear breasts are outshin'd,
Their tinctures are naething sae true.
What can we compare with thy voice,
And what with thy humour sae sweet?
Nae music can bless with sic joys;
Sure angels are just sae complete.

Fair blossom of ilka delight,
Whose beauties ten thousand outshine:
Thy sweet shall be lasting and bright,
Being mix'd with sae many divine.
Ye powers, who have given sic charms
To Eliza, your image below,
O save her frae all human harms!
And make her hours happily flow.

Ramsay wrote this song to the old air of "Sae merry as we twa hae been;" and if we may believe in the antiquity of the chorus, elsewhere printed in this work,

there can be no doubt that he departed very far from the peculiar character of the ancient song. Allan was a man of such a joyous temperament, that he sometimes saw joy where others might see sorrow; and he certainly shared very moderately in that humour for weeping which has shed so much water through our modern compositions. To those who can feel a sad as well as a pleasant spirit in this air, the two songs may be acceptable. Ramsay's will teach us to enjoy what the other will teach us to despise.

O'ER THE MUIR TO MAGGY.

And I'll o'er the muir to Maggy,
Her wit and sweetness call me;
Then to my fair I'll show my mind,
Whatever may befal me:
If she love mirth, I'll learn to sing;
Or likes the Nine to follow,
I'll lay my lugs in Pindus spring,
And invocate Apollo.

If she admire a martial mind,
I'll sheath my limbs in armour;
If to the softer dance inclin'd,
With gayest airs I'll charm her:

If she love grandeur, day and night
I'll plot my nation's glory,
Find favour in my prince's sight,
And shine in future story.

Beauty can wonders work with ease,
Where wit is corresponding,
And bravest men know best to please,
With complaisance abounding.
My bonny Maggy's love can turn
Me to what shape she pleases,
If in her breast that flame shall burn,
Which in my bosom bleezes.

This is a pleasing effusion of Allan Ramsay's Muse, and has been composed in one of her happiest moods. The unwearied affection of the lover is free from whining sentiment and quaint conceit. Much older verses than these were once popular, and bore the same name; but they were less delicate than witty, and have been deservedly forgotten. Ramsay's song is a favourite—few ladies hearts could withstand a lover of such gifts and endowments—who gratified their pride by his personal homage, and their vanity by romantic promises which could not well be fulfilled.