

IV.

“AULD LANG SYNE,”—ITS ORIGIN, POETRY, AND MUSIC. By JAMES DICK, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE. COMMUNICATED BY ALEX. WOOD INGLIS, F.S.A. SCOT.

THE EARLY POEMS.

Perhaps it is not too much to say that “Auld Lang Syne” is the best known and most widely diffused song in the civilised world. The use of the sacred song “Old Hundred” is limited by differences of sect, and that of the National Anthem “God save the Queen” is confined to subjects of the British Empire. But sectarianism and nationality are parochial in comparison to the wide domain of humanity embraced by “Auld Lang Syne.” Our brethren in every quarter of the earth know it better than we do ourselves; and I have heard a mixed company of Scots, English, Germans, Italians, and French Swiss sing the chorus in an upland hotel in Switzerland. The poetry and the music of the song as now known, have been developed from poetry and music which existed previously. In both its parts, it is an example of the evolution of art. If it should be thought that this view deprives Robert Burns of the merit of originality, then so far as Shakspeare has plagiarised “Romeo and Juliet” from an old Italian tale, and Handel has cribbed the “Hailstone” chorus from Carissimi’s “Jonah,” Burns is in the same list. But pedantry of this sort may be brushed aside. What all the three named artists touched they embellished,—they found dry bones and breathed into them life. It is the purpose of this paper to trace the development of the poetry and music of a world-wide song, the representative of a form of literature which has always existed, and which has stirred human emotion in every age, in spite of contempt continually poured on it.

The earliest germ of the song “Auld Lang Syne” is found in an anonymous poem of the 15th century, which George Bannatyne inserted in 1568 into his well-known manuscript of Scottish poetry, now in the Advocates’ Library. The title of the poem “Auld kindnes Foryett,” is

in modern Scottish "[Should] auld acquaintance [be] forgot,"—the first line of all the subsequent poems on the subject. This old poem, beginning "This warld is all bot fenyeit fair" in eight stanzas of eight lines, is catalogued on page 59 of "Memorials of George Bannatyne. Edinburgh, 1829," and is written on folio 80*b* of the manuscript. It is the soliloquy of one in straitened circumstances, whose condition is much aggravated by reflections on the ingratitude of those who professed themselves friends in his former prosperous days. The verses of this unknown writer have considerable merit, and Lord Hailes inserted them in "Ancient Scottish Poems. Edinburgh, 1770." The fifth stanza may be quoted as a specimen of the poetry of the latter part of the 15th century or the beginning of the 16th, and as an example of the masculine strength of the old Scots language :—

"They wad me hals with hude and hatt,
 Quhyle I wes riche and had anewch,
 About me friendis anew I gatt,
 Rycht blythlie on me thay lewch :
 Bot now they mak it wondir tewch,
 And lattis me stand befor the yett :
 Thairfoir this warld is very frewch,
 And auld kyndnes is quyt foryett."

The second song on the subject known to exist, is printed in Watson's collection of Scottish poems published in 1711, entitled "Old Longsyne." It consists of twelve stanzas of eight lines, and is written throughout in English, with the exception of the term "Syne" which occurs in every stanza. The author is not known, but the poem has been ascribed to Sir Robert Aytoun, a courtier and well-known poet, who followed James the Sixth to England, and who subsequently became private secretary to the Queen. Internal evidence, however, is against him as the author, for he did not live in rebellious times, as referred to in one of the verses. It is more generally believed to be the work of Francis Sempill of Beltrees, who lived in the middle of the seventeenth century, one of a family which produced poets for four successive generations. The earliest account of this distinguished family is of "Johne the Danser," whom Knox describes with his wife "Mary Levingston surnamit the

Lusty," who danced to so much purpose that Queen Mary bestowed lands on him. The Regent Morton subsequently attempted to dispossess him, on the ground that Crown lands could not be alienated, but was unsuccessful. Francis Sempill was the most interesting of his tribe, and he has had assigned to him the authorship of three of our best humorous songs, "Fy let us a' to the bridal," "She rose and lat me in," and "Maggy Lauder," all of which were turned into Anglo-Scottish by the Durfey school of rhymers with most indifferent success.

The poem "Old Longsyne" is not at all in the style of Francis Sempill, but it is in a manuscript book containing his poems it is said, and he has the best claim to be considered the author. It is inserted in all professedly good collections of Scottish songs, and begins—

"Should old acquaintance be forgot,
And never thought upon?"

For an account of the rival claimants Aytoun and Sempill, see respectively "The Poems of Sir Robert Aytoun, by Charles Rogers. London, privately printed, 1871," and "The Poems of the Sempills of Beltrees, by James Paterson. Edinburgh, 1849."

The third song is that of Allan Ramsay, entitled "Auld Lang Syne," beginning—

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
Tho' they return with scars?"

—which he printed in the first volume of his "Tea Table Miscellany," published in 1724. It is in five stanzas of eight lines, of the same measure as the previous song, and is written in English, with the exception of one or two words. It is so well known and has been so often printed, that there is no need here to refer to it at length.

THE MODERN SONG.

The first record of the present well-known song is in Robert Burns' letter to his friend Mrs Dunlop, dated December 17, 1788, wherein he enclosed her a copy of the verses, saying, "There is an old song and tune

which has often thrilled through my soul," and he apostrophised it in these words, "Light lie the turf on the breast of the heaven-inspired poet who composed this glorious fragment!" Five years afterwards—letter, September, 1793—he sent a copy of the song to George Thomson, who then was projecting the issue of a collection of Scottish songs, with music, with a note that the air was mediocre, but that the song he sent was a song of the olden time, which never was in print, nor even in manuscript, until he took it down from an old man singing,—adding that the poetry was enough to recommend any air. About the same time he sent another copy to James Johnson for the now celebrated Standard Collection of Scottish Songs, the "Scots Musical Museum;" and it was printed and published for the first time in December 1796, in the fifth volume of that work, about five months after Burns died. A verbatim copy of the verses will be given at the close of this paper. Burns became first acquainted with Johnson in Edinburgh at one of the meetings of the Crochallan Fencibles' Club in 1788. A very large number of Burns' songs were first printed in Johnson's Collection, many of which were inserted anonymously by the directions of Burns himself. Subsequently he informed Johnson that the songs so marked he had given to the world as old verses, but that in fact little more than the chorus of them was ancient, though there was no reason to tell everybody this piece of intelligence. It is now known for certain that he was the author of "Up in the morning early," "I'm ower young to marry yet," "Strathallan's lament," "The lovely lass of Inverness," "My heart's in the highlands," "M'Pherson's farewell," "My bonie Mary," and a number of others, although all these were published anonymously in the *Museum*. "Auld Langsyne" is in the same category. Burns practised innocent deception for various reasons. In the case of "Auld Langsyne" he had praised the writer of the verses in such high terms, and compromised himself so much, that he was practically barred from subsequently claiming it as his own composition, even if he had thought of doing so. That there was an old rustic song of some sort, with a chorus of the same class as Burns' song, is suspected, but nobody is known to have heard of it, and all attempts to discover the smallest trace of it have been fruitless, and Burns it is believed owed nothing to the old song except the chorus or a fragment of the

chorus. The specimens of “Auld Langsyne” here referred to were too dull and heavy as patterns for the bright, merry verses of Burns.

In July 1799, or more than two years after Burns’ verses were first published in the “Scots Musical Museum,” they were printed in the second half volume of Thomson’s Select “Songs of Scotland,” to the sweet and simple melody to be presently noticed. But the original order of the stanzas was not adhered to, and for some reason or another the second stanza in the *Museum* became the last in Thomson’s collection. No explanation of this displacement has ever been made, and it so happens that nearly all the modern reprints of the song follow Thomson’s arrangement of the stanzas. This is unfortunate, because it spoils the natural sequence and regular continuity of the song. The original begins by assuming that the friends have met for social enjoyment, and immediately the cup of kindness is passed round to fire enthusiasm. Remembrance of the happy days of childhood and youth are indulged in, and then sombre reflections on the parting from the native land at manhood. Lastly the friends shake hands with the parting-cup. But according to Thomson’s version, the companions meet, begin the feast, and then join hands, after which they return to their cups and discuss more pint-stoups. This surely is a corruption of the original. The meeting and parting of friends is the time for salutation or embrace, not the middle of the function. Friends at a feast do not get up in the middle of it, shake hands, and begin again. As Mr Scott Douglas remarked on the subject, after the hand-shaking verse the play is over, and the curtain should fall.

THE MUSIC.

A song is not a complete lyric without a melody. Although this is a self-evident definition, it is remarkable how few modern poets have taken any pains to get their verses set to appropriate melodies. The great writers, with the exception of one here and there, have thrown their songs to the world unclad, to find musical garments as best they could. They seemed to consider that the choice of a melody for their verses was beneath notice, and that such care

was only fit for the popular writer of street ballads. Since the age of Queen Elizabeth, poets have neglected this important part of a song; Robert Burns is perhaps the most conspicuous example of a great song-writer who followed a different course. It is very remarkable how little attention his biographers have given to this rare characteristic of Burns. The predominant idea in his mind, when writing a song, was the choice of a melody; and there was a nervous care bestowed over the adoption of a suitable air always present with him. When he got a subject to write upon, or when he wished to rewrite some old unrepresentable song, he often postponed the composition until he was familiar with the air it should be sung to. In his letters he again and again reverts to the subject, and it would be easy to give numerous quotations in support of his attention to the choice of melodies. How much merit in these matchless lyrics is due to the singing quality of them, the smoothness and limpidity of the verses, it is impossible to say; but it cannot, I think, be doubted that they were improved in the process. Burns wrote the poetry and chose almost all the melodies for the 250 songs he sent to Thomson and Johnson.

THE OLD MELODY.

In taking a short survey of the melody of the popular social song of Scotland, it should be clearly noted that there are two tunes bearing the name "Auld Lang Syne." There is the old one which Burns was familiar with, and which he designated to Thomson as "mediocre," and the later air which, although in existence before his time, and used for the dance and for old songs of his district, he did not know in connection with "Auld Lang Syne," as it was not printed with the words of his song until the year 1799, when he had been dead three years. The old melody had done service for all the "Langsyne" songs prior to the year named; and it went out of use as the older songs disappeared.

Up to the year 1700 there is not in any written record of music the trace of an air entitled "Auld Lang Syne;" and prior to about the year 1670, no air can be recognised as resembling either of the two

melodies which in succession have done service to the song. The first publication where the music of the old tune appears is a small book, printed in London in the year 1700. Only one copy is believed to be in existence;¹ and until it was discovered, its existence was unsuspected. The full title of this work is "A Collection of Original Scotch-Tunes (full of the Highland Humours) for the Violin: being the first of this kind yet Printed, most of them being in the compass of the Flute. London: Printed by William Pearson, in Red Cross Alley in Jewin-Street, for Henry Playford, at his shop in the Temple-Change, Fleet-Street, 1700." It contains thirty-nine airs, among which are "Killycrankie," "The Collier's Lass," "Jingling Geordie," "The Birks of Abergeldie," "Allan Water," and "Deil Stick the Minister." The publisher Henry Playford was the son of John Playford, a celebrated music publisher and seller, of the seventeenth century, who issued a large number of music-books in England, and to whom the country is indebted for the preservation of numerous specimens of fine English popular music, and also for many Scottish airs. This rare little volume of "Scotch tunes" is a small oblong quarto of sixteen pages; and one of the thirty-nine airs which it contains is designated in Cockney Scotch, "For Old Long Gine my Jo." The tunes have no words, being a collection for the violin. See Appendix I., No. 1.

This and the other music in Playford's collection is evidence that the tunes were in existence previously, and were known in the seventeenth century. As bearing on Burns' "song of the olden time," it is a curious fact, that although the tune fits the song of "Old Long Syne" by Francis Sempill of Beltrees, yet there would appear to have been some old popular song current at the same time, for the title of the song in Playford's book, and that of the chorus which Burns sent to Johnson "For Auld Lang Syne my Jo," are precisely alike. There is no reason why Sempill's song should not have been sung in England, for the English liked that sort of dreary verse in their ballads; but it is scarcely conceivable that such a song could be popular in Scotland.

¹ It is at present in the possession of Mr Alex. W. Inglis, a Fellow of the Society.

Therefore I think, with others, that there was an old rustic song, current in Scotland, now entirely lost, the chorus of which was heard by Burns.

The earliest publication of the old melody, *with verse*, is in the first printed Scottish song-book with music, called the *Orpheus Caledonius*, a collection of fifty songs, in a folio volume, printed and issued in 1725 in London, by William Thomson, a Scotsman resident there. As a boy he took part in the orchestra for the concert at St Cecilia's Feast in Edinburgh, 22nd November 1695, and is there styled Dan. Thompson's boy. Dan was one of the King's trumpeters. William Thomson gained a good deal of fame as a boy singer about the end of the seventeenth century, which procured for him the patronage of royalty and some members of the aristocracy. His first and second volumes of the second edition of the *Orpheus Caledonius*¹ were dedicated respectively to Queen Caroline and the Duchess of Hamilton. The old tune "Auld Lang Syne" occurs as the 31st song in the volume of 1725. Perhaps it was taken from Playford's little book; but, there are some variations from the original copy, and they are so striking that it is doubtful whether it was obtained from Playford at all. Very likely the air was sung to Allan Ramsay's words before 1725, and the copy in the *Orpheus Caledonius* represents the air as performed in the beginning of the eighteenth century. It is in the same key as Playford's. The words attached to the song are those verses ascribed to Allan Ramsay, beginning "Should auld acquaintance be forgot, though they return with scars?" which first appeared in the *Tea-Table Miscellany*, two years prior to the first issue of the *Orpheus Caledonius*. It was one of the songs pirated by Thomson, to which Ramsay directed attention in the second edition of his *Miscellany*. See Appendix I., No. 2.

Allan Ramsay was very much annoyed with Thomson for appropriating his verses in a wholesale way, and to meet him on his own ground he printed a book in 1726 entitled *Musick for Allan Ramsay's Collection of Scots Songs*, which contains the music of 71 songs from the

¹ The second edition of the *Orpheus Caledonius* was published in 1733 in two volumes octavo. The first volume was a reproduction of the fifty songs in the first edition of 1725, the second volume contained fifty additional songs—words and music.

Tea Table Miscellany of 1724. The intention was to publish further volumes, but the above was all that appeared. The tune of “Auld Langsyne” with Ramsay’s verses is in this collection, and the music will be found copied as No. 3 of Appendix I.

The next appearance of the old melody was in the third volume of the *Caledonian Pocket Companion*, published in London by James Oswald, a violin-player and a music publisher, about the middle of last century. This work was for instruments,—without words to the music,—and the old melody differs from the other two. The second strain particularly, is not at all like either of the two previous copies, or any other subsequent transcriptions of it. It resembles the second movement of an old tune to which I will afterwards refer, entitled “The Duke of Buccleuch tune,” belonging to the seventeenth century. In explanation of all the musical flourishes in this set, it must be remembered that it was written for the violin, and not for the voice. See Appendix I., No. 4.

The fourth appearance of the melody, in an important music-book, was in the year 1787, in the first volume of the *Scots Musical Museum*, again with Allan Ramsay’s words. The musical editor introduced new variations into the air, which here differs from all the copies previously known. See Appendix I., No. 5.

The precise date when Burns sent his song to Johnson for the *Scots Musical Museum* has not been ascertained, but it probably was in the year 1795. Burns did not make the acquaintance of Johnson until after 1787, when the first volume of that *Collection* had just been published; but from that year, until he died, the poet was in constant correspondence with him. The fifth volume of the *Museum*, containing the original impression of his song, was published at the end of 1796, a few months after the poet’s death.¹ The tune is the old melody, with further variations. It is written in the key of D, a minor third lower than that to Ramsay’s words in the first volume of the same work. A considerable alteration had now been made from the original music of 1700. The air has been much simplified, and very much

¹ Burns must have seen the proof of Johnson’s fifth volume, for there are two notes in his handwriting in the Glenriddel MS. distinctly referring to its contents.

improved. It is well within the compass of the human voice, and Burns would not have so relentlessly condemned it as mediocre if he had seen and heard it in the present form. To show at a glance the different transcriptions of the old melody as it appeared in the various publications, I have made a copy of the whole number in parallel lines, transposed all into one key—the key of D,—so that the variations can be seen by any tyro in music. See Appendix I, No. 6.

THE MODERN MELODY.

The first time the song of Burns was printed, with the melody now so well known, and to which it is universally sung, was in the second volume of Thomson's *Select Songs of Scotland*, published in 1799. The editor rejected the old time-worn tune, and replaced it with a variation of another popular melody, which for many years had done service in a variety of forms for the dance and song of Scotland. I will take these in the order of time they appeared in print, and show the development into the modern melody. The germ is in a melody entitled "The Duke of Buccleugh's tune," printed in a collection called *Apollo's Banquet*, issued after the middle of the seventeenth century. The title is, "Apollo's Banquet, or the Violin Book, containing New Ayres, Theatre Tunes, Horn Pipes, Jiggs, and Scotch Tunes. London: John Playford." David Laing, in the Appendix to the Introduction to the Illustrations by Stenhouse to the *Scots Musical Museum*, states that this volume, *Apollo's Banquet*, was advertised in another publication of 1685; but there was an earlier edition than this, for it was advertised in the fourth edition of the *Dancing Master* issued in 1670. The music here given was copied from the *sixth* edition of 1690, the earliest copy in the British Museum. The first movement of the tune has a resemblance to "Auld Lang Syne," and, so far as I know, is the earliest specimen of music on which the melody is based. The melody having a Scottish title, may be assumed to be one of the "Scotch tunes" in the collection. This is confirmed by the striking resemblance of the second movement to the popular melody of Burns' song "There was a lad was born in Kyle." By a transposition into

the next key of D, this second movement will be recognised at once as the music of Burns' celebrated natal song. This is the tune "O 'gin ye were deid, guidman," as old as the Reformation, for it forms one of the spiritual parodies of the "Gude and Godlie Ballads." It proves the nationality of the composite melody of "The Duke of Buccleugh's tune." See Appendix II., No. 1.

After a lapse of more than seventy years, the modern melody turns up in a more substantive form. About 1757, Robert Bremner a voluminous publisher of Scottish song and dance music, issued *A Collection of Scots Reels or Country Dances* in Edinburgh. A strathspey called "The Miller's Wedding" appears there, and the third and fourth movements are substantially the same tune as "Auld Lang Syne." See Appendix II., No. 2.

In 1780, Alexander M'Glashan, a leader of dance orchestras in Edinburgh, and a person of magnificent appearance and showy dress, known by the nick-name of "King M'Glashan," published *A Collection of Strathspey Reels*; and there, under the title of "The Miller's Daughter," is printed, note for note, the third and fourth movements of "The Miller's Wedding," from Bremner's Collection of Scotch Reels, 1757. See Appendix II., No. 4.

On comparing this strathspey with the modern tune of "Auld Lang Syne," one is struck by the notes which make up the distinctive character of the melody; and, further on, I will refer to this strathspey again. Of the same family complexion is a dance tune called "The lasses of the ferry," which Neil Stewart printed in his collection *Newest and Best Reels or Country Dances*, published in Edinburgh 1761. See Appendix II., No. 3.

In the year 1780, Angus Cumming published *A Collection of Strathspeys or old Highland Reels* (dated Edinburgh, 1780). With one or two unimportant variations, probably due to misprints, "The Miller's Daughter" in this collection is identical with the tunes in Bremner's and M'Glashan's collections. See Appendix II., No. 5.

In the year 1784, Neil Gow of Dunkeld, the celebrated fiddler, published *A Collection of Strathspey Reels*, which was sold by Neil Stewart previously referred to. The third and fourth movements of

"The Miller's Daughter" in this collection are substantially copied from the earlier publications, but there are some variations which bring it closer to the modern tune of "Auld Lang Syne."

Between 1782 and 1788, James Aird issued *A Collection of Scots Airs*, in three volumes. The publisher hailed from Glasgow, where he carried on an extensive business as a music-seller. Here the specimen of the tune "Auld Lang Syne" bearing the name of "Roger's Farewell" is to be found in the third volume. The similarity will be easily recognised. See Appendix II., No. 6.

The locale of the tune is now transferred to England, and its appearance in a work by an English musician has given rise to some controversy as to its origin. The music of the overture to the opera of *Rosina*, composed in 1783 by William Shield, a native of Durham county, was founded on popular or well-known strains, and the last movement of it is the strathspey "The Miller's Wedding," served up with the true Scots snap. It is directed to be performed "allegro," by oboes for the melody, and by bassoons, to imitate the bagpipes, for the lower parts of the harmony, which consists of one note—the lower C—held out for the whole sixteen bars of melody, and seven bars of the chorus repeated. See Appendix III., No. 11.

All the specimens of the modern melody of "Auld Lang Syne" above named are for instruments, to be played as a dance tune, and have been selected from the most important collections which appeared in the last century. In no case are they accompanied by verses. The song and the dance, however, are so intimately connected that, on a close search among the folk music of all nations, we should probably find that most dance tunes at some time or other had poetry set to them. In the case of Scotland, it is quite clear that such was the practice; and a very great proportion of the melodies of songs has been obtained purely from dance tunes, adapted to suit the varying rhythm of verses. The early musical manuscripts of Scotland are all dance music; not that this proves that all the tunes were originally composed for the dance, for we know of the existence of songs earlier than the date of the manuscripts. The tune now under consideration was then originally a dance tune so far as we know, although it is probable it was sung to

verses before the date of its earliest appearance in any dance collection. The first of the series in print set to poetry is the old rustic song, "I've been courtin' at a lass," being the complaint of a lover that as his sweetheart had "sic a gleib o' gear," he had small prospect of gaining her parents' favour. These verses were first printed in Herd's collection of 1776, and the music, with the words from Herd, is in the fourth volume of Johnson's *Museum* of 1792, No. 306. The melody will be immediately recognised as an adaptation of the dance, "The Miller's Daughter." See Appendix II., No. 7.

In the same volume of Herd, the song "Hey, how, Johnnie lad" is also printed with music for the first time. This is evidently an older song than the previous one. The words are more archaic, and the verse hobbles a little. It is one of the class of high-kilted ditties not exactly fit for presentation in this age. Robert Jamieson, the editor of *Popular Ballads and Songs*, 1806, says that this was a popular air in his youth, which he often had heard sung in the north of Scotland; and he printed a stanza which he remembered and a version of his own to be sung to the old popular air he knew. The air was also printed in the *Museum* 1792, with the words from Herd, and it is "The Lassies of the Ferry" tune from Stewart's Reels, of 1761. See Appendix II., No. 8.

Another of the same cycle of melodies is "O can ye labour lea, young man?" in the same volume of the *Museum* as the two others. In Cromeck's *Select Scottish Songs* there is a note by Burns on this song, to the following effect:—"That it has long been known as a favourite among the inhabitants of Galloway and Nithsdale, and that the first verse should be restored to its original state:

" I fee'd a lad at Roodmass,
 Wi' siller pennies three;
 When he cam' hame at Martinmas
 He couldna' labour lea."

Stenhouse said that he always heard "Michaelmas" as the term of the first line, and this agrees with the measure of the melody. Burns did not restore the words, but he wrote some very pretty verses, of three

stanzas, beginning as Stenhouse knew them, "I fee'd a man at Michaelmas"—the original manuscript of which is now in the British Museum in his own handwriting, as sent to his friend Johnson for insertion in the *Scots Musical Museum*, where they were first printed to the tune as No. 394 of the fifth volume, published in 1792. Bearing in mind that this was an old song which Burns for obvious reasons re-wrote, sung to the melody in the *Museum*, the tune will be recognised almost note for note as that now known as "Auld Lang Syne," set to the verses of Burns. See Appendix II., No. 12.

The tune "Comin' through the rye" is one of the same family, and the Scottish tune—of which the English tune of that name is an imitation—is a variation of "The Miller's Daughter." The London tune saw the light of day first, and because that happened the song has been claimed as English. John Watlen was a music-seller in Edinburgh, who emigrated to London. There, in the middle of 1796, he issued in sheet form the English version of "Comin' through the rye," with a tune framed on the old melody, but with some variations. See Appendix II., No. 9.

While this song was being prepared in London, James Johnson had set up the old tune, known over all the south of Scotland, and engraved it as number 418 of the *Museum*, in the fifth volume, published December 1796. See Appendix II., No. 10. The London song had acquired so much popularity during its short run, that Johnson inserted Watlen's version in the same volume of the *Museum* alongside of the old version. To the general public, Burns is not known as having had anything to do with the old song "Comin' through the rye;" but those who search in the byways of the poet's work will find that several years before 1796 a very queer version of the song was found in a very queer volume written by the poet, which fortunately has disappeared, it is hoped permanently. Burns refers to this volume in a letter to one of his intimate friends, Robert Cleghorn, dated December 1793, or three years before the English song was printed. In the *Museum* No. 418 Johnson printed the old Scotch verse to its own proper melody—one of the sets of the "Auld Lang Syne" tune immediately after the London song.

I now come to the time when the famous song was first printed to the music with which it is now always associated. The correspondence between the poet and George Thomson was continuous from September 1792, and in the following year a copy of the verses of "Auld Lang Syne" was sent to this publisher. During the lifetime of the poet, Thomson had only printed five of his songs, and censorious critics say that after the poet's death, he hurried forward the remaining portion of his first volume, containing a number of Burns' songs, in order that he might anticipate Currie's *Life*, which was in the press. Be that as it may, "Auld Lang Syne" was not published by Thomson until 1799 (more than two years after Johnson had published it), and then it appeared for the first time, associated with the melody to which it has ever since been sung.

William Stenhouse, in his illustrations of the *Museum*, states that Thomson had the words arranged to the air introduced by Shield in his overture to the opera of *Rosina*, written by Mr Brookes, and acted in Covent Garden in 1783, and that Shield borrowed the air, almost note for note, from the third and fourth strains of the Scottish strathspey in Cumming's collection, under the title of "The Miller's Wedding." The controversy which arose some years ago as to the origin of the air, took its rise from this note of Stenhouse; and William Chappell, the author of *Popular Music of the Olden Time*, who took part in the discussion, adopted only that portion of the note referring to Shield. He carefully ignored the old popular tune which Stenhouse named, and which, as has been shown, had been used in so many different ways during the 18th century. The dance tune, printed in at least two important collections prior to the composition of *Rosina*—viz., Bremner's in 1757, and Cumming's in 1780—was entirely set aside; not to mention the traditional airs of "O can ye labour lea" and "I've been courtin' at a Lass," which floated over the south of Scotland for many years previously. It is not known where Stenhouse got the information for his statement; but if he got it from Thomson, then there is a mystery which requires to be cleared up. Why should there be any mystery? It has been assumed that both these airs are alike. But that is not so. There are several important differences. If Thomson's set

was taken from Shield, then it is a variation of the *Rosina* melody, just as this latter is a variation of "The Miller's Wedding" from Bremner's and Cumming's collections. The mystery is that Thomson, if Stenhouse is correct, should have gone to an English opera for the source of the air, when there was under his eyes the tune published six or seven years before,—almost exactly the one he printed, note for note. Anyone, even unacquainted with musical notation, by referring to the Appendix II., No. 13, will be able to observe the variations which exist between Thomson's set, as the tune of "Auld Lang Syne," and all the others which preceded it in point of time of publication. It would be wearisome to go through the whole; and therefore, I will only direct attention to the air in the overture of Shield's *Rosina* and the tune "O can ye labour lea" as printed in the *Museum* 1792. The melody of "Auld Lang Syne" consists of sixteen bars of music, which absorb the whole eight lines of the stanza—verse and chorus. Comparing the *Rosina* music with the tune "Auld Lang Syne" as originally printed by Thomson it will be seen that in each of seven bars, or one-half of the whole, there are one or more notes which differ. That is to say, in nearly every second bar, on the average, there are notes which differ from the "Auld Lang Syne" tune; and there is alteration in the rhythm or character of the music, owing to the absence of dotted notes in the *Rosina* music. The variations in the tune extend over the whole of the double stanza, and the actual number of notes differing is thirteen.

Analyzing, in the same way, the old song, "I fee'd a man at Michaelmas," or "O can ye labour lea," I find there are altogether only two bars in which there are variations in the notes from "Auld Lang Syne;" and the whole number of different notes in the two verses is six, which all occur in bars three and five of the first four lines. The music of the second four lines or the chorus of "Auld Lang Syne," and that of the corresponding verse in "O can ye labour lea," is identical. Stenhouse ought to have known this. He was familiar with the *Museum*, and wrote a commentary on every song in it, including "O can ye labour lea." He need not have gone beyond the collection to find Thomson's tune, for it had been conveyed bodily into Thomson's collection, with just such trifling alterations as a new editor might make on revising the copy.

Now, this latter song was printed in the fourth volume of the *Museum* in 1792. Thomson had no need to go to England for his copy of “Auld Lang Syne.” The music, and he knew it, was in the volume of a rival publisher—the tune of a well-known old Nithsdale song, with new words by the poet Burns. Then, if he borrowed the tune from Shield, how does it come to pass that he did not copy Shield, but appeared to get an almost exact copy of the tune of “O can ye labour lea”? I think it is quite clear that Thomson copied his tune from this song, but no doubt he did not wish to be considered under obligation to a contemporary rival. The intimate relation between Burns and Johnson could not be exactly in accordance with Thomson’s desires. While he was gathering and selecting in his leisurely fashion, and showing no signs of any public result, Johnson, with the active assistance of Burns, was sending out volume after volume of songs, and forestalling him. Let it be assumed that Thomson made alterations in the Shield set—say, in the chorus of the tune—then it is the greatest case of perfectly unconscious imitation in music that I know of. The far more simple theory is that he found the tune of the 394th song of the *Museum* to suit exactly the words of “Auld Lang Syne,” and he appropriated it.

The reader should examine the last three lines of music in Appendix II., where I have marked with an asterisk all the notes in the “Rosina” tune and those of “O can ye labour lea” which differ from the melody “Auld Long Syne” the last line of music in the Appendix.

It may not be unnecessary to state that “Rosina,” like all English operas of the eighteenth century, was a musical medley. The music is partly original and partly borrowed. In the body of the work there are several Scottish airs, and the overture contains old musical themes and tunes worked up for orchestral performance. There is no need for any detailed analysis of the overture: it may be sufficient to say that several old English dance tunes are used, as for example “Singleton’s Slip,” which will be found as No. 144 of the fourth edition of the *Dancing Master*, 1670. It is no discredit to Shield that he borrowed old melodies, for all his contemporaries did the same. He took as the final strain for the overture an old familiar melody—that of the one we are discussing, and made it do service as the closing subject.

I have not made any particular search, but I am not aware that Burns' song of "Auld Lang Syne," with its modern tune, jumped into immediate popularity. The original folio edition of Thomson's *Collection*, with the original setting of the air, was too expensive for a large circulation, and the smaller octavo edition was not issued until 1822. The tune is in the second volume of R. A. Smith's *Scottish Minstrel*, which was completed and issued in six volumes by 1824. It is set to three stanzas of Burns' song with three others, not above mediocrity, by an unknown hand, who was evidently a temperance reformer, as the drinking-verses have been suppressed. The editor has had the audacity to announce Burns as the author without any note pointing out that new stanzas are an excrescence. I have not noticed "Auld Lang Syne" in any other music-book early in the century, and it would be interesting to know whether it appeared elsewhere than in Thomson's book between the years 1799 and 1822. But in the last fifty years this happy effusion of our national poet has progressed in favour at an increasing rate: it now girdles the habitable earth, and beyond all question it is the widest-spread social song in the Anglo-Saxon language. He is a wise man who recognises song as a powerful lever for raising emotion; and Browning was correct when he said that music has exercised an influence over human action, more than all the other arts combined.

APPENDIX I.

The old melody "Auld Lang=syne," showing the variations from 1700 to 1796.

No. 1.—From "Original Scotch Tunes," Playford, 1700, transposed from key F.



No. 2.—From "Orpheus Caledonius," 1725, transposed from key F.



No. 3.—From "Music for the Scots Songs in the Tea-Table Miscellany," about 1726. Transposed from key F.



No. 4.—From "Caledonian Pocket Companion," b. iii. p. 21, *circa* 1759; first and last movements transposed from F.



No. 5.—From "Scots Musical Museum," vol. i., 1787, No. 26, transposed from E \flat .



No. 6.—From "Scots Musical Museum," vol. v., 1796, 413, with Burns' words; original key D, in $\frac{2}{4}$ time.



APPENDIX II.

Family Group of the modern tune "Auld Lang=syne."

No. 1. "Duke of Buccleugh's Tune," from "Apollo's Banquet," 6th edition, 1690. The second movement of the tune resembles "O gin ye were doid, Gudeman."

No. 2. "The Miller's Wedding," from Robert Bremner's "First Collection of Scots Reels," circa 1757. Original key D.

No. 3. "The Lassies of the Ferry," from "A Collection of the Newest and Best Reels." Neil Stewart, 1761-2, page 33. Original key A.

No. 4. "The Miller's Daughter," from "A Collection of Strathspey Reels." Alexander M'Glashan [1780]. First and fourth movements. Original key D.

No. 5. "The Miller's Daughter," from "A Collection of Strathspey or Old Highland Reels," by Angus Cumming. Edinburgh, 1780. First and fourth movements. Original key D.

No. 6. "Roger's Farewell," from "A Selection of Scotch, English, Irish, and Foreign Airs." James Aird, 1788. (Third selection.)

No. 7. "I've been Courting at a Lass." "Scots Musical Museum," 1792. No. 306.

No. 8. "Hey, how, Johnie Lad." "Scots Musical Museum," 1792. No. 357.

No. 9. "Comin' thro' the Rye." "Scots Musical Museum," 1796. No. 418. (The London variation or set.) Original key B \flat .

No. 10. "Comin' thro' the Rye." "Scots Musical Museum," Dec. 1796. No. 417. (Old Scottish Tune.)

No. 11. Last Movement in the Overture of "Rosina." London, 1784. Key C.

No. 12. "O can ye labour Lea?" "Scots Musical Museum," 1792. No. 394. Key F.

No. 13. "Auld Langsyne," from "Thomson's Select Collection of Scottish Songs," 1799, vol. ii. Key F.

* The asterisks in Nos. 11 and 12 indicate the variations from "Auld Langsyne," No. 13.

"AULD LANG=SYNE."

From the original printed copies.

Words from "Scots Musical Museum," 1736,
Vol. V., No. 413.

Music from Thomson's "Select Collection
of Scottish Songs," 1799, Vol. II.

Should auld ac-quaint-ance be for-got, And never brought to mind? Should
 auld ac-quaint-ance be for-got, And auld lang-syne? For
 auld lang-syne, my jo, For auld lang-syne: We'll
 tak' a cup¹ o' kind-ness yet, For auld lang-syne.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
 And never brought to mind?
 Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
 And auld lang=syne?

Chorus—For auld lang=syne, my jo,
 For auld lang=syne:

We'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet,
 For auld lang=syne.

And surely ye'll be your pint stowp,
 And surely I'll be mine!
 And we'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet,
 For auld lang=syne.
 For auld, &c.

We twa hae ran about the braes,
 And pou'd the gowans fine;
 But we've wander'd mony a weary fitt
 Sin' auld lang=syne.
 For auld, &c.

We twa hae paidl't in the burn,
 Frae morning sun till dine;
 But seas between us braid hae roar'd,
 Sin' auld lang=syne.
 For auld, &c.

And there's a hand my trusty fiere!
 And gie's a hand o' thine!
 And we'll tak' a right gude-willie=waught,²
 For auld lang=syne.
 For auld, &c.

¹ Some sing "kiss" in place of "cup".—(*Orig. note.*)

² A deep drink of good-will.—(*J. D.*)