

Dissertation on the Scottish Music.

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THE genius of the Scots has, in every age, shone conspicuous in Poetry and Music. Of the first, the Poems of *Offian*, composed in an age of rude antiquity, are sufficient proof*. The peevish doubt entertained by some of their authenticity, appears to be the utmost refinement of scepticism. As genuine remains of *Celtic* Poetry, the Poems of *Offian* will continue to be admired as long as there shall remain a taste for the *sublime and beautiful*.

The *Scottish Music* does no less honour to the genius of the country. The old *Scottish* songs have always been admired for the wild pathetic sweetness which distinguishes them from the music of every other country. I mean, in this Essay, to try to fix the aera of our most ancient melodies, and to trace the history of our music down to modern times. In a path so untrodden, where scarce a track is to be seen to lead the way, the surest guide I have to follow is the music itself, and a few authorities which our old historians afford us. After all, the utmost I aim at is probability; and, perhaps, by some hints, I may lead others to a more direct road.

From

* Our historian Buchanan, born on the banks of Loch Lomond, in the mouth of the Highlands, in his History of Scotland, written above 200 years ago, gives the following testimony of the antiquity and authenticity of the Gaelic bards and their poems:

“ Accinunt autem carmen, non inconcinne factum, quod fere laudes fortium virorum contineat; nec aliud fere argumentum eorum bardis tractant.”—*Buch. Hist. lib. primus, p. 14. folio edit.*

From their artless simplicity, it is evident, that the Scottish melodies are derived from very remote antiquity. The vulgar conjecture, that *David Rizio* was either the composer or reformer of the Scottish songs, has of late been so fully exposed, that I need say very little to confute it. That the science of music was well understood, and that we had great masters, both theorists and performers, above a century before Rizio came to Scotland, I shall immediately show. He is by no contemporary writer said to have been a composer. He is not even extolled as a great performer; nor does tradition point him out as the author of any one particular song; and, although we should allow him to have had ability, the short time he was in Scotland, scarce three years, was too busy with him to admit of such amusement.—Let us endeavour to trace back our music to its origin.

The origin of music, in every country, is from the woods and lawns*.

The simplicity and wildness of several of our old Scottish melodies, denote them to be the production of a pastoral age and country prior to the use of any musical instrument beyond that of a very limited scale of a few natural notes, and prior to the knowledge of any

* The rise of music is so beautifully described by *Lucretius*, that the classical reader will excuse the following quotation.

At liquidas avium voces imitariæ ore
 Ante fuit multo, quam lævia carmina cantu
 Concelebrare homines possent, aureisque juvare:
 Et zephyri cava per calamorum sibila primum
 Agrestis docuere cavas inflare cicutas,
 Inde minutatim dulces didicere querelas,
 Tibia quas fundit digitis pulsata canentum,
 Avia per nemora, ac silvas saltusque reperta,
 Per loca pastorum deserta, atque otia dia.

LUCRET. lib. 5.

any rules of artificial music. This conjecture, if solid, must carry them up to a high period of antiquity.

The most ancient of the Scottish songs, still preserved, are extremely simple, and void of all art. They consist of one measure only, and have no second part, as the later or more modern airs have. They must, therefore, have been composed for a very simple instrument, such as the shepherd's reed or pipe, of few notes, and of the plain *diatonic scale*, without using the semitones, or sharps and flats. The distinguishing strain of our old melodies is plaintive and melancholy; and what makes them soothing and affecting, to a great degree, is the constant use of the concordant tones, the third and fifth of the scale, often ending upon the fifth, and some of them on the sixth of the scale. By this artless standard some of our old Scottish melodies may be traced; such as *Gil Morice—There came a ghost to Marg'et's door—O laddie, I man lo' thee—Hap me wi' thy pettycoat*—I mean the old sets of these airs, as the last air, which I take to be one of our oldest songs, is so modernized as scarce to have a trace of its ancient simplicity. The simple original air is still sung by nurses in the country, as a lullaby to still their babes to sleep. It may be said, that the words of some of these songs denote them to be of no very ancient date: But it is well known, that many of our old songs have changed their original names, by being adapted to more modern words. Some old tunes have a second part; but it is only a repetition of the first part on the higher octave; and these additions are probably of more modern date than the tunes themselves.

That the science of Music, and the rules of composition, were known amongst us before the 15th century, is certain. *King James the First* of Scotland is celebrated by all the Scottish historians not only as an excellent performer, but as a great theorist in Music, and

a composer of airs to his own verses. 'Hic etenim in musica (says Fordun) in artis perfectione, in tympano et choro, in psalterio et organo, ad summæ perfectionis magisterium, natura creatrix, ultra humanam aestimationem, ipsum vivaciter decoravit.' *Scotichron. vol. 2. lib. 16. cap. 28.*—Fordun has a whole chapter, the 29th of his History, on King James's learning and knowledge in the ancient Greek, as well as in the more modern scales of music, which, for its curiosity, is worthy to be read by the modern theorists in music.

The next authority is *John Major*, who celebrates King James I. as a poet, a composer, and admirable performer of music. Major affirms, that, in his time, the verses and songs of that Prince were esteemed amongst the first of the Scottish melodies. I shall give the whole passage :

'In vernacula lingua artificiosissimus compositor; cujus codices plurimi, et cantilenæ, memoriter adhuc apud Scotos inter primos habentur.—Artificiosam cantilenam (composed) *Yas sen*, &c. et jucundum artificiosumque illum cantum; at *Beltayn*; quem alii de *Dalketh* et *Gargeil* mutare studuerunt, quia in arce, aut camera, clausus servabatur, in qua mulier cum matre habitabat.'

It is a pity that neither the words nor the music of these celebrated ballads have come down to us. According to the historian, the last must have been full of humour, and extremely popular; his words may imply, that several parodies or imitations of the subject had been made, which time has likewise deprived us of.

Amongst the number of our old Scottish melodies, it is, I think, scarce to be doubted, that many of King James's compositions, which were esteemed among *the first of the age*, are still remaining, and make

make a part of our finest old melodies; but, as no tradition down to our time has ascertained them, they, in all probability, pass undistinguished under other names, and are adapted to modern words. There can be little doubt, however, that most of James's compositions have shared the same fate with many other old airs. Taffoni, the Italian poet, as afterwards mentioned, says expressly, that 'King James composed many sacred pieces of vocal music,' which are now lost. All our old heroic ballads, such as *Hardiknute*, and others, were undoubtedly sung to *chants* composed for them, which are now lost. Among those still preserved, are the episodes of *Offian*, which are at this day sung in the Highlands. *Gil Morice—The Flowers of the Forest—Hero and Leander*, &c. are still sung to their original pathetic strains. These, however, are but a few of many old ballads whose airs are now unknown. In the MS. collection of Scottish Poems, made by Banatyne before the year 1568, the donation of the Earl of Hyndford to the Advocates Library at Edinburgh, the favourite poem, *The Cherry and the Slae*, and likewise a poem of Sir Richard Maitland of Lethington, father of the famous Secretary Maitland, are entitled, 'To be sung to the tune of the *Banks of Helicon*.' This must have been a well known air 200 years ago, as it was sung to such popular words; but it is now lost. It cannot exist under other words, as the metrical stanza of the *Cherry and the Slae* is so particular, that I know no air at this day that could be adapted to it. We find also, in old books, many names of songs, yet neither of the verses or tunes do we know any thing at this day. *Gavin Douglas*, in his prologue to the 12th *Æneid*, recites the beginning words of three well known songs in his time, 1480, thus :

'The schip failis over the salt fame,
'Will bring thir merchandis and my leman hame,
——— 'I will be blyith and licht,
'My hert is lent upon sa gudly wicht,
——— 'I come hidder to wow.'

O o o

And,

And, in the prologue to 13th Æneid,

—— ‘ The jolly day now dawis.’

In the same way a great many of King James I.’s poetical pieces are now lost, or, perhaps, as his poem of *Gbrist’s Kirk of the Green*, may erroneously be ascribed to others.

It may be suspected, from the above high-strained testimonies, that his countrymen have rather allowed themselves to be carried too far in displaying the qualifications of their King. I shall, however, produce the authority of a foreigner, a celebrated author, who does James still more honour than the writers of his own country; and, singular as the proposition may appear, I shall endeavour to prove, that the Scottish melodies, so far from being either invented or improved by an *Italian* master, were made the models of imitation in the finest vocal compositions of one of the greatest masters of composition in Italy of his age.

The celebrated *Carlo Gesualdo*, Prince of Venosa, formerly *Venusium*, famous as the place of birth of Horace, flourished about the middle or towards the end of the 16th century, and died in 1614. *Blancanus*, in his *Chronologia-Mathematicorum*, thus distinguishes him: ‘ The most noble Carolus Gesualdus, Prince of Venusium, was the prince of musicians of our age; he having recalled the *Rythme* into music, introduced such a stile of modulation, that other musicians yielded the preference to him; and all singers and players on stringed instruments, laying aside that of others, every where eagerly embraced his music *.’—He is also celebrated by Merfennus, Kircher, and almost all the writers of that age, as one of the most learned and greatest composers of vocal music in his time.

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* Sir J. Hawkins, vol. 3. p. 212.

To apply this account of the Prince of Venosa to the present subject.—*Alessandro Tassoni*, in his *Pensieri Diversi*, lib. 10. thus expresses himself: ‘ We may reckon among us moderns *James King of Scotland*, who not only composed many *sacred pieces* of vocal music, but also, of himself, *invented a new kind of music, plaintive and melancholy, different from all other*; in which he has been imitated by *Carlo Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa*, who in our age has improved music with new and admirable inventions *.’

How perfectly characteristic, this, of the pathetic strains of the old Scottish songs! What an illustrious testimony to their excellency!

Some of the Dilettanti, in the Italian music of the present times, may perhaps sneer at being told, that the *Italians*, the restorers of music, owe the improvement of their music to the early introduction of Scottish melody into it: Yet nothing is more certain, not only from the candid acknowledgment of Tassoni, but from the testimony of the Italian music itself before the Prince of Venosa’s time, as I shall attempt to illustrate.

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It

* ‘ Noi ancora possiamo connumerar, tra nostri, Jacopo Re di Scozia, che non pur cose sacre compose in canto, ma trova da se stesso, una nuova musica, *lamentevole e mesta, differente da tutte l’altre*. Nel che poi e stato imitato da *Carlo Gesualdo, Principe di Venosa*, che in questa, nostra eta ha illustrata anch’ egli la musica con nuove mirabili inventioni.’—Let me here do justice to the restorer of this record, who, next to Tassoni, deserves the thanks of every Scotsman; I mean the late *Patrick Lord Elibank*: For, although Tassoni is well known as a poet, particularly by his celebrated *Secchia rapita*, the first of the modern mock heroic poems, yet his book *De Diversi Pensieri*, though printed near two centuries ago, and containing a great deal of learned and curious observations, is but little known on this side of the Alps: And the above curious passage, which had so long escaped notice, might quietly have slept in the dark repose of great libraries, had not the penetrating research of this learned Nobleman, about twenty years ago, produced it to light.

It is at this day no longer a question, that the art of composition in parts, or what is called *harmony*, is the invention of the moderns; but by whom invented, or at what particular aera, is not so clear. As the cultivation of modern music was chiefly among the ecclesiastics, on account of the church services daily in use to be sung by them, the rules of harmony undoubtedly took their rise, and were improved among them. *Guido d'Arezzo*, a Benedictine monk, about the beginning of the eleventh century, is, by many authors, said to have reformed the scale, by introducing the lines and the notation on them by points, instead of the letters of the alphabet, formerly in use; from which the name of *counterpoint*, for the art of composition in parts, is derived. From that period, it was by degrees improved, until it was brought to perfection in the golden age of the restoration of other polite arts and sciences in Italy, the Pontificate of Leo X. At this time flourished the venerable *Palestrina*, styled the *father of harmony*; and in the same century, though later, the Prince of Venosa, mentioned above. As the productions of a harmonist and thorough master of the art of counterpoint, the compositions of *Palestrina*, even at this day, strike us with admiration by their artful fugues, and the full and sublime harmony of their parts. Nothing in the church stile, except the grandeur and loftiness of the choruses of the late great *Handel*, can exceed them: Yet, in one great point, the music of *Palestrina* is deficient. We may be entertained with the artful contrivance and learning of a well wrought *fugue*, or elevated by the harmony of a full choir of voices, yet still melody or air is wanting in the music of the venerable *Palestrina*. To any person versant in the compositions of the great masters of harmony in *Palestrina's* time, there will appear the same stile, artful contrivance, and learning, running through every species of their compositions; their *masses*, *motetti*, *madrigals*, and *canons*. The harmony is full, but they are deficient in melody*.

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* Although *Palestrina* is with propriety styled the Father of Harmony in Italy, as, by

I do not remember to have seen any cantata, or song for a single voice, of the age of *Palestrina*. The Italian music for private entertainment;

by the solemn grandeur of his harmony, and fine contrivances, he certainly carried the art of counterpoint far beyond any thing known before the age of Leo X.; yet it is but justice to say, that harmonic composition flourished in several parts of Europe besides Italy, and that there existed several eminent masters, even before the time of *Palestrina*. *Lewis Guicciardin*, (nephew of Francis, the historian), who was contemporary with *Palestrina*, and died before him in 1589, as cited by *Abbé de Bos*, in his *Critical Reflections*, gives a list of several eminent Flemish composers; and adds, that, in his time, it was the practice in the Netherlands, and had been a custom there of long standing, to furnish Europe with musicians. The old church services that had been long in use both in England and Scotland, several of which still exist, are solid proofs of the profound knowledge of our old composers in counterpoint, before the time of *Palestrina*. The church services of *Marbeck*, and of *Tallis*, who was organist to Henry VIII. are original and learned, and abound in fine harmony. *Geminiani*, that great musical genius, on hearing *Tallis's* anthem, '*I call and cry*,' is said to have exclaimed, in rapture, 'The man who made this must have been inspired!' No less eminent was *Birde*, the scholar of *Tallis*, and several others mentioned by *Morley*, in his *Introduction to Practical Music*, in the number of which *Morley* himself may be ranked. From that time a continued succession of very eminent composers in the church stile, through the reigns of Queen Elizabeth, King James, and Charles I. have flourished.—To digress a little on the subject of the English music. The science of music, from the earliest ages, appears to have been patronised by the Kings of England; hence the study of music became a branch of education, through every rank, from the Prince downwards, inasmuch that the gentleman who had not been taught music was judged to be deficient in his education. *Morley*, whose excellent book was printed in 1597, mentioning, in his introductory dialogue, in what universal use and reputation skill in music was then held, makes *Philomathes* thus speak: 'Being at a banquet, supper being ended, and music-books, according to custom, brought to table, the mistress of the house presented me with a part, earnestly intreating me to sing; but when, after many excuses, I protested unfeignedly that I could not, every one began to wonder, yea some whispered to others, demanding how I was brought up.'—In *Piachan's Complete Gentleman*, a book held in great esteem in the reign of James I. the author requires of his gentleman 'to be able to sing his part sure, and at sight, and withal to play the same on the viol or lute.'—In the following reign of King Charles I. both the knowledge and practice of music continued to be universal.—In *Walton's Complete Angler*, a book which con-

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tainment, at that time, seems to have been the *madrigal*, usually composed for some favourite stanza or love verses of Petrarcha, Ariosto, or

tains many curious facts and critical observations relating to the times, the learned and ingenious annotator, Sir John Hawkins, mentions the following: 'In an old book of *enigma's*, the solution of one of them is a *barber*, who is represented by a wooden cut as shaving a person, while another, who is waiting for his turn, is playing on a lute, and on the wall hangs another lute or cittern.' This fact, says the annotator, explains a passage in *Ben Johnson's Silent Woman*, which none of his editors seem to have understood. *Morose*, in Act 3. Scene 5. cries out, 'That curled barber! I have married his *cittern*, that's common to all men.' His editors Upton and Whaley, not understanding the manners of the time when Ben Johnson wrote, read the above, 'his *cistern* or reservoir.'—The music cultivated for private entertainment, at that time, was the Madrigal and Glee, in three or more parts, many of which still continue to be sung in several societies of vocal music. Their harmony is good, though generally languid and deficient in air.—The time was now at hand when the triumph of harmony was to cease in England. The purity of the times would not admit of so superstitious an appendage to devotion as music: When the *Book of Common Prayer*, of *Thanksgivings*, and *Praises to God*, was condemned by the meeting of *Westminster Divines*, as 'a great hindrance to the preaching of the word *,' the choral church service, of course, was expelled. The Psalms of David made a narrow escape. To strip them, however, of any pretence to music, it was enjoined the minister or clerk, 'to read the psalm, line by line, before the singing thereof.' In conformity with these ordinances, the Parliament, 4th January 1644-5, repealed the statutes of Edward VI. and Queen Elizabeth, for uniformity in the *Common Prayer*, and ordained the same to be *abolished* and *disused* in every church and chapel throughout England and Wales. To follow out these ordinances, the organs were removed from the churches; and, to put an end to the study as well as practice of church music and harmony, the choral service-books were zealously collected together and destroyed. The painted glass windows, as favouring of idolatry, were broken down. It was well the churches themselves escaped demolition. The cathedral of St Paul's and other churches were converted into barracks and horse-quarters, and the porticoes were leased out for shops. Where had the muse of Milton now taken flight, who thus exclaims?

O! let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloysters pale,

And

* Neal's Hist. of the Puritans.—Nov. 1644.

or Tasso, commonly in the *fugue* stile, and of three or four parts. The madrigal, when sung by proper voices, is soothing and pleasant; but, wanting

And love the high embowed roof,
With antique pillars massy proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light;
There let the pealing organ blow
To the full-voic'd choir below,
In service high and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness through mine ear
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all heaven before mine eyes.

Il *Perferos*.

Happily the reign of fanaticism was short. The year 1660 restored the liturgy, and with it re-established the choral church service, with the organs and choristers. The Italian opera had been established from the beginning of the century in Italy, and had now found its way into France. Melody, in the songs for a single voice, with the recitative and chorus, attended with instrumental accompaniments, were novelties which began to be adopted by the English composers. On the Restoration, by the opening of the theatres, with music as their attendant, the national taste became much improved. Into the solemn, rigid, harmonic stile, a mixture of air and melody was introduced. The canon, the madrigal, and glee, gave way to airs for a single voice, duets, and catches, more suited to the convivial taste of the English. In the number of the old organists and chapel-masters, several fine composers appeared. Musical interludes were introduced into the old plays of Shakespear, and Beaumont and Fletcher. *Matthew Lock*, a chorister originally, and the composer of some fine anthems, set to music recitatives and songs for the incantation scenes of the witches in *Macbeth*, which, for the expression of the words, particularly in the first recitative, 'Speak, sister, speak!' and the solemnity and sweetness of the songs, and fullness of the chorus, may at this day be esteemed fine compositions.—*Michael Wise*, besides his anthems, which are excellent, composed some good duets and catches: His two-part song, *Old Chiron*, is well known.—*Purcell* next appeared; one of the greatest musical geniuses that England or any nation, either before or since his time, can boast of. Purcell was fond of the Italian music; and in that which he composed for the theatre, he certainly formed his taste on it. In his songs there

wanting air, soon becomes languid and dull: A certain proof this, that the music of Italy, at the above time, was altogether artificial and harmonic; and that *melody*, the soul of music, was not then regarded

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there is a mixture of recitative; but the recitative of Purcell (as Lock's before him) exceeds in melody that of the Italian, which is often dry, and unvaried. In his cantata, '*From rose bowers*,' the first recitative cannot be exceeded, either for melody or expression. In judging, however, between the Italian stage-music, and that of the English at this time, we must consider, that the Italian recitative, in their opera's, was meant to express a sort of musical discourse, with proper regard to emphasis and cadence, without running into song, which in its part was kept distinct from any mixture of recitative. The English stage-music, or that of the interludes introduced into plays, was confined by no such strict rules; and, therefore, where the subject or words required expression, a mixture of recitative and air was agreeable and pleasing to an English ear. This seems to be the taste, very properly adopted by the English composers for the stage at this time. The genius of Purcell was universal. For sublimity and grandeur in the church stile, his *Te Deum* and *Jubilate* will keep their rank while any taste for church-music shall remain: For his stage-music, consisting of single-voice songs or cantatas, and songs of two and three parts, they are well known. His most applauded, are those made for *Dryden's* King Arthur, the Tempest, Indian Queen, and Oedipus. That fine collection, the *Orpheus-Britannicus*, which contains most of his stage-songs, is in the hands of every lover of music. His love-songs are pathetic and tender, and finely varied; and his martial songs are most animating and spirited. His two-part song in the tragedy of *Bonduca*, '*To arms!*' and '*Britons, strike home!*' is one of many which might be mentioned. He was the first who introduced the trumpet as an accompaniment to his songs: I have been told by a person who was well acquainted with Handel, that, on hearing one of Purcell's songs, accompanied by Grano on the trumpet, that great master was so struck with it, that, in his opera of *Rinaldo*, the first which he composed in England, he made the song '*Eor la tromba*' for Grano, one of the finest trumpet songs that ever was composed, or perhaps ever will be composed, as that noble, martial instrument is now neglected and laid aside, as too manly for the soft manners of the age! Indeed, the whole opera of *Rinaldo* is excellent, notwithstanding the ridicule of the Spectator, which, by the bye, does not affect the music.—To conclude: If we are to look for a good national taste in music, at any time, in England, I imagine it must be in the compositions of Purcell, and his contemporaries Lock, Wise, Blow, &c. To speak of the merit of the present theatrical music in England, would be rash: I shall therefore here conclude this digression, which, in an essay on so salutatory a subject, will, I hope, be excused.

ed or cultivated. Harmony, and the art of composition in parts, it must be confessed, is one of the noblest of the modern inventions: That a fondness, however, for that only, to almost the total neglect or exclusion of air and melody in music, should have universally prevailed at this time in Italy, is a remarkable fact*. We shall further illustrate this from another historical fact in the annals of music.

The *Opera*, that noble and elegant species of the musical drama, now so much improved and established in most of the theatres in Europe, and which chiefly consists in *airs* for a *single voice*, with instrumental accompaniments, was not known in Palestrina's or the Prince of Venosa's time. It was first introduced in the beginning of the seventeenth century. The dramatic poem of *Euridice*, made by *Ottavio Rinuccini*, a Florentine poet, was set to music by *Jacopo Peri*, who, on that occasion, invented the *recitativo*, or musical discourse. The opera of *Euridice* was first represented on the theatre at Florence in the year 1600, on occasion of the marriage of Mary of Medicis with King Henry IV. of France. What appears most remarkable, so much was harmonic composition universally established, that, in the above opera, there is not one air or song for a single voice. The whole opera consists of *duetti*, *terzetti*, *cori*, and *recitativo*.—To return to my subject:

In the above state of music in Italy, we may suppose the Scottish melodies of King James I. had found their way into that country. Is it, then, to be wondered at, that such a genius as the Prince of Venosa should be struck with the genuine simplicity of strains which spoke directly to the heart, and that he should imitate and adopt

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* It is curious to observe, that the state of music in England, at the same period, appears to have been precisely similar to that in Italy, that is, purely harmonic, as may be seen from the compositions of Marbeck, Tallis, Birde, &c.; and, after them, of Henry Lawes, Lanere, and Campion, down to the Restoration.

those venerable monuments of Gothic grandeur, with the choristers belonging to them, according to the splendour of their ritual church-service, were so many schools or seminaries for the cultivation of music. It must be owned, however, that, although the science of harmonic music was cultivated by the church composers, yet, as the merit of the church music, at that time, consisted in its harmony only, the fine flights and pathetic expression of our songs could borrow nothing from thence.

This was likewise the aera of chivalry: The feudal system was then in its full vigour.

The Scottish nobility, possessed of great estates, hereditary jurisdictions, and a numerous vassalage, maintained, in their remote castles, a state and splendour little inferior to the court of their Kings. Upon solemn occasions, *tilts* and *tournaments* were proclaimed, and *festivals* held with all the Gothic grandeur and magnificence of *chivalry*, which drew numbers of knights and dames to these solemnities.—Thus the picturesque, the sublime *Warton!*

Illumining the vaulted roof,
 A thousand torches flam'd aloof,
 From massy cups, with golden gleam,
 Sparkled the red Metheglin's stream:
 To grace the gorgeous festival,
 Along the lofty windowed hall,
 The storied tapestry was hung,
 With minstrelsy the rafters rung;
 Of harps, that, with reflected light,
 From the proud gallery glittered bright.
 To crown the banquet's solemn clofe,
 Themes of *British* glory rose;
 And, to the strings of various chime,
 Attemper'd the *heroic* rhyme.

ODE on the Grave of King Arthur.

James

James IV. and V. were both of them magnificent Princes: They kept splendid courts, and were great promoters of those heroic entertainments*. In the family of every chief, or head of a clan, the *Bard* was a very considerable person: His office, upon solemn feasts, was to sing or rehearse the splendid actions of the heroes, ancestors of the family, which he accompanied with the harp. At this time, too, there were *itinerant* or *strolling minstrels*, performers on the harp, who went about the country, from house to house, upon solemn occasions, reciting *heroic ballads*, and other popular episodes.

These wandering harpers are mentioned thus by Major: ‘*In Citbara, Hibernenses aut silvestres Scoti, qui in illa arte praeicipui sunt.*’—To these sylvan minstrels, I imagine we are indebted for many fine old songs, which are more varied in their melody, and more regular in their composition, as they approach nearer to modern times, though still retaining ‘their wood-notes wild †.’

To

* Pitcottie's History of James IV. Leslie, &c.

We have two fine pictures of these Princes by two very eminent masters, which I cannot resist the pleasure of exhibiting in this place.

The learned *Erasmus* thus describes King James IV. ‘*Erat ea corporis specie, ut vel procul Regem posses agnoscere, ingenii vis mira, incredibilis omnium rerum cognitio.*’

The French poet *Ronsard*, who came to Scotland with the Princess *Magdalene*, wife to James V. and was an officer in the King's household, gives the following beautiful description of that Prince:

Ce Roy d'Ecosse étoit en la fleur de ses ans
 Ces cheveux non tondus comme fin or luisans
 Cordonez et crespez, flotans dessus sa face;
 Et, par son col de lait, lui donnoit de bon grace
 Son Port étoit Royal, son regard vigoureux,
 De vertus, et de bonneur et de guerre amoureux.
 La douceur, et la force, illustroient son visage,
 Si que VENUS et MARS en avoient fait partage.

† To frame an idea of the heaven-born genius of the ancient minstrel or wandering harper, in a rude age, see Dr Beattie's fine poem, the *Minstrel*, Part I.

—Song.

To the wandering harpers we are certainly indebted for that species of music which is now scarcely known, I mean, *the Port*. Almost every great family had a *Port* that went by the name of the family. Of the few that are still preserved are, *Port Lennox*, *Port Gordon*, *Port Seton*, and *Port Athole*, which are all of them excellent in their kind. The *Port* is not of the martial strain of the *march*, as some have conjectured; those above named being all in the plaintive strain, and modulated for the harp.

The *Pibrach*, the march or battle-tune of the *Highland Clans*, with the different strains introduced of the *coronich*, &c. is fitted for the *bagpipe* only: Its measure, in the *pas grave* of the *Highland piper*, equipped with his flag and military ensigns, when marching up to battle, is stately and animating, rising often to a degree of fury.

To

—Song was his favourite, and first pursuit,
The wild harp rang to his adventurous hand,
And languish'd to his breath the plaintive flute;
His infant muse, though artless, was not mute.—

Meanwhile, whate'er of beautiful, or new,
Sublime, or dreadful, in earth, sea, or sky,
By chance or search, was offered to his view,
He scanned with curious and romantic eye,
Whate'er of lore tradition could supply,
From Gothic tale, or fong, or fable old,
Rous'd him, still keen to listen, and to pry;
At last, though long by penury controll'd,
And solitude, his soul her graces 'gan unfold.

Minstrel, Part I.

The last of these strolling harpers was *Rory* or *Roderick Dall*, who, about fifty years ago, was well known and much carested by the Highland gentry, whose houses he frequented. His chief residence was about Blair in Athole and Dunkeld. He was esteemed a good composer, and a fine performer on the harp, to which he sung in a pathetic manner. Many of his songs are preserved in that country.

To class the old Scottish songs according to the several aeras in which we may suppose them to have been made, is an attempt which can arise to conjecture only, except as to such of them as carry more certain marks, to be afterwards taken notice of.

Of our most ancient melodies, I have, in the beginning of this essay, mentioned a few, such as *Gil Morrice*, &c. with what I imagine to be the signatures of their antiquity. To what aera these can be referred, I do not pretend to say: My conjecture, however, is, that, from their artless simplicity, they belong to an age prior to James I. The investigation of other pieces of our oldest music, by the same standard, may be an agreeable amusement to the curious.

From the genius of King James, his profound skill in the principles of music, and great performance on the harp, we may esteem him the inventor, or at least the reformer of the Scottish vocal music. Of his age (some of them very probably of his composition) may be reckoned the following simple, plaintive, and ancient melodies: *Jocky and Sandie—Waly waly up the bank—Ay waking Oh!—Be constant ay—Will ye go to the ewe-bughts, Marion.*

From these, by an insensible gradation, we are led to what I conjecture may be called the *second epoch* of our songs, that is, from the beginning of the reign of *King James IV.* *James V.* and to the end of that of *Queen Mary*, within which period may be reckoned the following songs, the old tragic ballads, *Busk ye, busk ye, my bonny bride—Hero and Leander—Willie's rair and Willie's fair—Gromlet's Lilt—The Flowers of the Forest—Gilderoy—Balow my boy—The Gaberlunye Man—The bonny Earle of Murray—Leeder Haughs and Yarow—Absence will never alter me—Tak' your auld cloak about ye.* In the preceding airs, besides a more varied melody, there is likewise an artful degree of modulation, observable in several

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ral of them, in the introduction of the seventh of the key, as in *Waly Waly—The Flowers of the Forest—The bonny Earle of Murray*. This strain is peculiarly characteristic of the ancient Scottish songs, and has a fine pathetic effect, which must give pleasure to the most refined ear. As, in the foregoing observation, it is remarked by Taffoni, on the new-invented music of King James I. that it 'was *plaintive and melancholy, and different from all other music* *,' it may, with probability, be conjectured, from James's skill and masterly performance on the stringed instruments; that this peculiar strain, of the seventh of the key, may have been first invented and introduced into our old music by that Prince.

In the third aera, which comprehends the space of time from Queen Mary to the Restoration, may be classed the following songs, *Through the lang muir I followed my Willie—Pinky House—Etrick Banks—I'll never leave thee—The Broom of Coudenknows—Down the burn Davie—Auld Rob Morris—Where Helen lies—Fie on the wars—Thro' the wood, laddie—Fie let us a' to the wedding—Muir-land Willie*.

From these we are led to the last aera, that is, from the *Restoration to the Union*. Within this period, from their more regular measure, and more modern air, we may almost with certainty pronounce the following fine songs to have been made, *An' thou wert mine ain thing—O dear minnie, what sal I do—The bush aboon Traquair—The last time I came o'er the moor—Mary Scot, the flower of Yarow—The bonny boatman—Sae merry as we ha' been—My dearie an' thou die—She rose and let me in—My apron, dearie—Love is the cause of my mourning—Allan water—There's my thumb I'll ne'er beguile thee—The Highland laddie—Bonny Jean of Aberdeen—The last*
of

* Il truova da se stesso, un nuova musica, lamentevole e mesta, *differente da tutte laltre*.

of Patie's mill—The yellow-hair'd laddie—John Hay's bonny lassie—Tweed side—Lochaber.

We are not, however, to imagine, that, from this last period, the genius of Scottish music had taken flight: That is not the case. Indeed, the number of Scottish songs has of late not much increased; it, nevertheless, is true, that, since that last period, several fine songs have been made, which will stand the test of time. Amongst these are, *The birks of Invermay—The banks of Forth—The banks of Spey—Roslin Castle—The braes of Ballendine*. The two last were composed by Oswald, whose genius in composition, joined to his taste in the performance of the Scottish music, was natural and pathetic.

In thus classing the songs as above, it is obvious, that no fixed or certain rules can be prescribed. Some of these old songs, it is true, ascertain of themselves the precise aera to which they belong; such as, *The flowers of the Forest*, composed on the fatal battle of *Flowden*, where the gallant *James IV.* and the flower of the Scottish nobility and gentry fell;—*The Souters of Selkirk*, composed * on the same occasion;—*Gilderoy*, made on the death of a famous outlaw hanged by *James V.*;—*The bonny Erle of Murray*, slain by *Huntlie* in 1592. In general, however, in making those arrangements, be-

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* This ballad is founded on the following incident: Previous to the battle of *Flowden*, the town-clerk of *Selkirk* conducted a band of eighty *souters*, or shoemakers, of that town, who joined the royal army; and the town-clerk, in reward of his loyalty, was created a Knight-banneret by that Prince. They fought gallantly, and were most of them cut off. A few who escaped, found on their return, in the forest of *Ladywood edge*, the wife of one of their brethren lying dead, and her child sucking her breast. Thence the town of *Selkirk* obtained, for their arms, a woman sitting upon a sarcophagus, holding a child in her arms; in the back-ground a wood; and on the sarcophagus the arms of Scotland.

sides the characters which I have mentioned, as I know of no other distinguishing marks of a fixed standard, the only rule I could follow was to select a few of the most undoubted ancient melodies, such as may be supposed to be the production of the simplest instrument, of the most limited scale, as the shepherd's reed; and thence to trace them gradually downward, to more varied, artful, and regular modulations, the compositions of more polished times, and suitable to instruments of a more extended scale.

If, in following this plan, I have been successful, it will afford entertainment to persons of taste, to trace the simple strains of our rude ancestors through different ages, from King James I. who truly may be stiled the Father of the Scottish songs, so distinguished from the music of every other country, progressively downwards, to modern times. This, to a musical genius, may afford the same amusement it has given to me, in considering the melodies thus selected and arranged, trying them by the signatures above pointed out, and adding others to the number.

A second point I also had in view: It was, from the number of our Scottish songs, to select a few of those which I imagine to be the finest, and most distinguished for originality of air, agreeable modulation, and expression of the subject for which they have been composed. Upon a review of these airs, thus far I may venture to say, that, for genuine fancy, pleasing variety, and originality, they will stand the test of comparison with the music of any country, and afford entertainment to the most refined taste.

I have hinted, that our Scottish songs owe nothing to the *church-music* of the cathedrals and abbeys before the Reformation; for, although music made a considerable part of the ritual church-service, yet, from some of their books, which have escaped the rage of the Reformers,

Reformers, we find their music to have consisted entirely of harmonic compositions, of four, five, often of six, seven, and eight parts, all in strict counterpoint. Such were perfectly suitable to the solemnity of religious worship; and, when performed by a full choir of voices, accompanied by the organ, must undoubtedly have had a solemn and awful effect upon a mind disposed to devotion. Church-music has nothing to do with the passions. The stile of such composition is to calm the mind, and inspire devotion, suitable to the majesty of that *Being* to whom it is addressed. Nothing, however, can be more opposite than such harmonic compositions to the genius of love-songs, which consist in the simple melody of one single part.

It is a common tradition, that, in ridicule of the cathedral-service, several of their hymns were, by the wits among the Reformed, burlesqued, and sung as profane ballads. Of this there is some remaining evidence. The well known tunes of *John come kiss me now—Kind Robin loves me—and John Anderson my jo—*are said to be of that number.

At the establishment of the Reformation, one of the first pious works of the Reformed clergy was to translate, into Scottish metre, the Psalms of David, and to introduce them into the kirks, to be sung to the old church-tunes. John Knox's book of psalms, called *The Common Tunes*, is still extant, and sung in the churches, and consists of four parts; a treble, tenor, counter-alt, and bass. The harmony of these tunes is learned and full, and proves them to be the work of very able masters in the counterpoint.

In order, however, to enlarge the psalmody, the clergy soon after were at pains to translate, into Scottish metre, several parts of Scripture, and some old Latin hymns, and other pieces. At the same time,

time, as they had no objections to the old music, they made an effort to reclaim some of those tunes from the profane ballads into which they had been burlesqued, and sung by the vulgar.

A collection of these pieces was printed at Edinburgh about 1590, by Andro Hart, in old Saxon, or black letter, under the title of, *A compendious book of godly and spiritual songs, collectit out of sundrie parts of the scripture, with sundrie of other ballats, changed out of prophaine sanges, for avoiding of sinne and harlotrie, &c.*

Among these ballads, *John come kifs me now* makes his appearance; stripped, indeed, of his *prophane drefs*, which had promoted *sinne and harlotrie*; but, in exchange, so strangely equipped in his *penitential habit*, as to make a more ridiculous figure than his brother Jack, in the *Tale of a Tub*. As a curiosity, I shall give two or three of the stanzas of this new-converted godly ballad.

John come kifs me now,
John come kifs me now,
John come kifs me by and by,
And mak na mair adow.

The Lord thy God I am,
That (John) does thee call
John, represents man,
By grace celestial.

My prophets call, my preachers cry,
John come kifs me now,
John come kifs me by and by,
And mak na mair adow.

- *To laugh were want of godliness and grace,*
- *And to be grave exceeds all power of face.*

POPE.

What

What a strange medley of canting absurdity and nonsense; of shocking and indecent familiarity, under the name of Devotion! This was the leaven, which, fermenting into that wild spirit of fanaticism in the following age, involved the nation in blood, and overturned the state of the three kingdoms. Of this leaven, from some late appearances, there is reason to apprehend that too much still remains amongst us.

If the other tunes, preserved of the old church-music, were in the same stile of *John come kifs me now*, our fine old melodies, I think, could borrow nothing from them.

The Scottish melodies contain strong expression of the passions, particularly of the melancholy kind, in which the air often finely corresponds to the subject of the song. In this, I conjecture, the excellency of the ancient Greek music consisted, of which we are told such wonderful effects. The Greek musicians were also poets, who accompanied their own verses on the harp. Such, likewise, was the Saxon Alfred; and in the same light we may see our James I. who both of them accompanied their own poems on the lute or harp. Terpander is said to have composed music for the Iliad of Homer; Timotheus played and sung his own lyric poems; and the poet Simonides his own elegies:

‘ Quid moestius lacrymis Simonidis !’

exclaims Catullus; and, inspired with the genius of music, in this fine apostrophe, cries out our great poet!

And, O sad Virgin, could thy power
But raise Museus from his bower!
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing,
Such notes as warbled on the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made *bell* grant what *love* did seek.

Let

Let us acknowledge the excellency of the Greek music; yet, as the principles of harmony, or composition in parts, seem not to have been known to them, at least as far as has yet been discovered, this excellency of their music must have resulted from the natural melody of their airs, expressive of the words to which they were adapted. In this light, therefore, we may run a parallel between the ancient Greek music and our Scottish melodies; and, in spite of the prejudiced fondness which we are apt to conceive in favour of the ancients, it is probable that we do the best of their music no hurt in classing it with our own.

What person of taste can be insensible to the fine airs of, *I'll never leave thee—Allan Water—An' thou wer't mine ain thing—The braes of Ballendine, &c.* when sung with taste and feeling!

Love, in its various situations of *hope, success, disappointment, and despair*, are finely expressed in the natural melody of the old Scottish songs. How naturally does the air correspond with the following description of the restless languor of a maid in love!

Ay wa'king oh!
Wa'king ay and wearie;
Sleep I canna get,
For thinking o' my dearie.

When I sleep, I dream;
When I wake, I'm irie*;
Rest I canna get,
For thinking o' my dearie.

The simple melody of the old song *Waly! Waly!* is the pathetic complaint of a forsaken maid, bemoaning herself along the late-frequented

* *Irie* is a Scottish word that has no correspondent term in English. It implies that sort of fear which is conceived by a person fearful of apparitions.

quented haunts of her and her lover. The old Scottish word *waly* signifies *wail*, or heavy sorrow and lamentation.

O Waly, Waly! up the bank,
And waly, waly! down the brae;
And waly, waly! on yon burn side,
Where I and my true love did gae.

Thus *Petrarch*, in one of his beautiful sonnets:

Vallè, che de lamenti miei se' piena,
Fiume, che spesso del mio pianger cresci.—
Colle che mi piacesti, hor mi rincresci,
Ov' ancor par usanza amor mei mena—
Quinci vedea' l mio bene!—&c.

How soothing and plaintive is the lullaby of a forsaken mistress over her child, expressed in *Lady Anne Bothwell's lament!* How romantic the melody of the old love-ballad of *Hero and Leander!* What a melancholy love-story is told in the old song of *Jocky and Sandy!* And what frantic grief expressed in *I wish I were where Helen lies!*

It were endless to run through the many fine airs expressive of sentiment and passion in the number of our Scottish songs, which, when sung in the genuine natural manner, must affect the heart of every person of feeling, whose taste is not vitiated and seduced by *fashion and novelty*.

As the Scottish songs are the *flights of genius*, devoid of art, they bid defiance to artificial graces and affected cadences. A Scots song can only be sung in taste by a Scottish voice. To a sweet, liquid, flowing voice, capable of swelling a note from the softest to the fullest tone, and what the Italians call a *voce di petto*, must be joined

sensibility

sensibility and feeling, and a perfect understanding of the subject and words of the song, so as to know the *significant word* on which to *swell* or *soften* the tone, and lay the force of the note. From a want of knowledge of the language, it generally happens, that, to most of the foreign masters, our melodies, at first, must seem wild and uncouth; for which reason, in their performance, they generally fall short of our expectation. We sometimes, however, find a foreign master, who, with a genius for the pathetic, and a knowledge of the subject and words, has afforded very high pleasure in a Scottish song. Who could hear with insensibility, or without being moved in the greatest degree, *Tenducci* sing *I'll never leave thee*, or *The braes of Ballendine!*—or *Will ye go to the ewe-bughts, Marion*, sung by Signora Corri?

It is a common defect in some who pretend to sing, to affect to smother the words, by not articulating them, so as we scarce can find out either the subject or language of their song. This is always a sign of want of feeling, and the mark of a bad singer; particularly of Scottish songs, where there is generally so intimate a correspondence between the air and subject. Indeed, there can be no good vocal music without it.

The proper accompaniment of a Scottish song is a plain, thin, dropping bass, on the harpsichord or guitar. The fine breathings, those *heart felt touches* which *genius* alone can express, in our songs, are lost in a noisy accompaniment of instruments. The full cords of a thorough-bass should be used sparingly, and with judgment, not to overpower, but to support and raise the voice at proper pauses.

Where, with a fine voice, is joined some skill and execution on either of those instruments, the air, by way of symphony, or introduction to the song, should always be first played over; and, at the
close

close of every stanza, the last part of the air should be repeated, as a relief for the voice, which it gracefully sets off. In this *symphonic part*, the performer may shew his taste and fancy on the instrument, by varying it *ad libitum*.

A Scottish song admits of no cadence; I mean, by this, no fanciful or capricious descant upon the close of the tune. There is one embellishment, however, which a fine singer may easily acquire, that is, an easy *shake*. This, while the organs are flexible in a young voice, may, with practice, be easily attained.

A Scottish song, thus performed, is among the highest of entertainments to a *musical genius*. But is this genius to be acquired either in the performer or hearer? It cannot. *Genius in music as in poetry, is the gift of Heaven*. It is born with us; it is not to be learned.

An artist on the violin may display the magic of his fingers, in running from the top to the bottom of the finger-board, in various intricate *capricios*, which, at most, will only excite surprise; while a very middling performer of taste and feeling, in a subject that admits of the *pathos*, will touch the heart in its finest sensations. The finest of the Italian composers, and many of their fingers, possess this to an amazing degree. The opera-airs of those great masters, *Pergolese, Jomelli, Galuppi, Perez*, and many others of the present age, are wonderfully pathetic. Genius, however, and feeling, are not confined to country or climate. A maid at her spinning-wheel, who knew not a note in music, with a sweet voice, and the force of a native genius, has oft drawn tears from my eyes. That gift of Heaven, in short, is not to be defined: It can only be felt.

I cannot better conclude this essay, than in the words of one who possessed it in the most exalted degree. Addressing himself to a young composer, he speaks thus: ' Seek not to know what is *genius*. If thou hast it, thy feelings will tell thee what it is. If thou hast it not, thou never wilt know it. The genius of the musician subjects the universe to its power. It draws its pictures by sounds. It expresses ideas by feelings, and feelings by accents. We feel in our hearts the force of the passions which it excites. Through the medium of genius, *pleasure* assumes additional charms, and the *grief* which it excites breaks forth into cries. But, alas! to those who feel not in themselves the spring of genius, its expressions convey no idea. Its prodigies are unknown to those who cannot imitate them. Wouldst thou know if thou art animated with one spark of that bright fire? Run, fly to *Naples*, and there listen to the master-pieces of *Leo*, *Durante*, *Jomelli*, *Pergolese*. If thine eyes are filled with tears, thy heart palpitates, thy whole frame is agitated, and the oppression of transport arises almost to suffocation; take up *Metastasio*, his genius will inflame thine own, and thou wilt compose after his example. These are the operations of genius; and the tears of others will recompense thee for those which thy masters have caused thee to shed. But, if thou art calm and tranquil amidst the transports of that great art; if thou feelest no delirium, no *ecstasy*; if thou art only moved with pleasure, at what should transport thee with rapture, dost thou dare to ask what *genius* is? Profane not, vulgar man, that name sublime! What does it import thee to know what thou canst never feel? *

On

* Rousseau, sous le mot *genie*.