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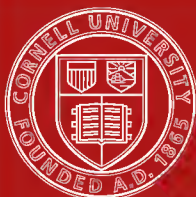
Marjory
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Lowland Scots Song: Its Interpretation

By *Marjory Kennedy-Fraser*

Lowland Scots Song, although tonally probably a branch, an off-shoot, of the Scoto-Celtic music-lore of the Scots Highlands and Islands, has yet, in feeling, much that is akin to the Saxon. Some years since, after giving a lecture-recital on Schumann's songs, I remember groping in my mind for a like impression, for something that was familiar and yet eluded me ; and I discovered in the end that the familiar emotional atmosphere for which I was seeking was that of our own Lowland Scots Song. Scotland's Celtic nature with a blend of the Saxon, and Schumann's Saxon with a dash of the more easterly Slav, show much of the same indooriness, domesticity of emotion, qualities that contrast with the fiercer passion and wind-and-wave intoxication of feeling characteristic of much Highland and Island lore. Not that the *perfervidum Scotorum* is wanting in Lowland song, but just that there is a fiercer blast of Scots passion in the Highland than in the Lowland lore.

Our young people who take up the study of their country's songs should know that Scotland had for long a powerful romantic influence on the mind of Europe. Bishop Percy's *Reliques*, which awakened European interest in the romantic ballad and produced German imitations, recoiled again on our own Walter Scott, whose work for long fed the flame of romance that lit up all the arts of Europe.

The singing of traditional song such as Scotland has produced is one of the most crucial tests of the singer's art. Operatic work may cover crudities in comparison ; and, in what is popularly termed Art-Song, so much of the interpretation is achieved by the composer's instrumental commentary, that the singer's task—if he (or she) be artist-musician enough to sing *mentally* through the accompaniment and have an imagination that is stirred by such musical tone-painting—is comparatively easy. The singer of the traditional *strophic* song, on the other hand, must by his own art, and aided only by his own creative imagination, supply all the subtle deviations from the normal that give a continuous, convincing, psychological sequence to the developments of the lyrical mood or of the dramatic situation. Such was the art of my father, David Kennedy, to which I was brought up from childhood, and I have never ceased to wonder since at the want of it in singers. I took it for granted ! And yet it is asking a great deal of singers who essay Scots song to reach this ideal.

On the interpretative side the ancient song and ballad indeed presuppose a traditional culture, a culture which, as Yeats has pointed out in his essay on Popular Poetry, cannot be taken for granted in these days, and much study and imagination, therefore, may have to be brought to bear on the subject before it will yield its full message. Such is one of the peculiar difficulties on the interpretative side. On the technical side there is much to accomplish, for it is a great mistake to imagine that simple Scots songs are simple in performance. The voice must be cultured and controlled. But after studies in voice-production have been made, we are only at the beginning of things. Although a fine cantabile type there

is in Scots Song, but few of the best of our songs can be regarded as mere opportunities for vocal display. Indeed in some of the character songs and lilt (in which we are very rich) you must put your voice in your pocket, so to speak, and bring out only so much as is required at the moment to supply the necessary lilt and colour.

On the purely musical side it cannot be too much insisted upon with young singers—and some not so very young either!—that accent and shape, beauty of form, intelligibility of phrase, and the hypnotism of rhythm—which plays such an all-important part in all art—can be attained only by carefully worked out *gradations*; and that such gradations can be achieved only by fierce economy, by cutting away as well as by adding on, by lessening the tone-quantity in one place that it may stand out in relief in another. If, indeed, you begin a tone-curving phrase with one shadow of a shade too much tone, you may from the first have made your intended crescendo curve impossible. And if—after a point, an accent arrived at, worked up to—you lean with the faintest too much stress or too long duration on a weak *following* beat—a common rhythmical feature in Scots music—you have wiped out again your climax, your point, you have destroyed your lilt, blurred your melodic shape.

Hence one occasionally finds an *unconscious* singer—with a good voice naturally free from faults of production—with mind not concerned overmuch with voice or tone, nor hampered with a stiffly pictured notation, give a much better lilting rhythm than a half-trained singer who, thinking too exclusively of tone, gives it out in full measure, note after note, until one entirely loses the shape and “cannot see the wood for the trees.”

As to the interpretation of Scots Song, no generalisation will suffice ; there are so many different types, each demanding its own style. Be it noted, there are no possible generalisations for the rendering of folk-song (whatever that term may be intended to convey) ; but for *all* song I would point out that, being one of the smaller forms of musical and literary crystallisation of thought and feeling, *and these in sequence*, it calls for a very delicate judgment how best, in such short space, to give *full* expression to the varying emotions *without injury to the design*—the everlasting problem in art—and that, song being different merely in degree and not in kind from other musical forms, naïveté is no more essential to traditional song than it is to symphony, which is only an aggrandisement of song. I labour this point, because, if you approach Scots Song, Lowland, Highland, or Hebridean, with the faintest idea that the performance of it must be a pose, such as that of the Watteau Shepherdess period of French life in the eighteenth century, you will miss its meaning and scope. Scots Song in short is art expressing itself in word and tone, in short forms. It is founded, as all vital art must be, on the manifestations of the human heart and mind. It must be psychologically true—we recognise ourselves in it. It must be beautiful in texture (tone) and convincing in design (form).

First then among Scots songs, as simplest in interpretation for the already well-trained singer, let us take the *love-reverie* type, such as Burns' "Afton Water," and associate with this the type dealing with reminiscent sentiment, such as Lady Nairne's "The Rowan Tree" and "The Auld Hoose." These—for the already well-

trained singer in *bel canto*, be it noted—are of a simple type, calling for little deviation from the normal.

The emotionally reminiscent type can be quite shortly dealt with. Here no definite and diverse characterisation is called for. There is mood and intensity of feeling, introspective, retrospective. But the flow of the melody heals the pain of remembrance itself has called up, and by the hypnotism of its rhythm dispels the present and leaves the past free to reveal itself. There is here then little to lure us from the even tenor of our way. There is little curving of the time off the even bar divisions, only just such as may be required to shape the phrase, towards which a natural gentle curve of tone quantity, *cresc.* and *dimin.*, also helps.

Such songs, including Tannahill's "Bonnie Wood o' Craigielea," the Aberdeenshire "Where Gadie rins," and the West-country "Bonnie, bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond," frame local landscapes. Such mood-landscape-painting is characteristic of Scottish art, alike in the medium of line and colour and in that of word and tone.

As an example, let us take the love-reverie, "Afton Water." Such songs, not addressed aloud to anyone, give expression to mental states. They more or less call up the image of the beloved in a scene that is in sympathy. The "Afton Water" setting is an extraordinarily convincing river-scene (I am alluding to the song with the old tune, not the modern one), and here the singer must keep as much in mind the effect upon the mood of the cool smooth-flowing water as the effect upon the emotions of the love-reverie.

In contrast to this let us turn to another mood-landscape, the herding song, "My dear Hielant Laddie O," by Tannahill.* How totally different this scene from that of "Afton Water." The mists, the crags, the glens, the loneliness, the echoing rocks, help out the expression of the half-sad wistfulness of a loving maid who is bidding farewell to her native mountains. But, be it noted that, even where there is sadness of farewell, a love song must never be *coldly* sad—there must be a rapturous glow of feeling within. I would keep ever before the mind here the intense loneliness, the Glencoe-like solitude of the surroundings. And the song must be sung to oneself in utter loneliness—almost as in a somnambulistic state—even although hundreds of people be present.

Again a contrasting landscape, that of Burns' "My Nannie, O." Here the "shrill westlin' wind, the rain, the mirk, the moors and mosses mony o" are set as a vividly contrasting background to the buoyant confident happiness of the youth whose "love tale is running smoothly." Here is none of the sensitive wistfulness of love, only its healthy exuberance of joy. And the air and the words are alike well fitted to express this exuberance. The song should be given *con moto*, expressing alike the joy of the anticipation of the love-tryst and of a long swinging walk over the moor.

Each song then has its own particular atmosphere, mood, landscape, and one would do well to cultivate to the fullest extent the power of mentalising such, for

* Only the words are lowland. Tannahill wrote his lyric to one of the tunes published in Patrick Macdonald's eighteenth-century collection of Highland and Island Airs. (Note that this tune and "Ca' the Yowes" have much in common.)

if you see vividly enough with the eye of the mind you can convey in song such vision to others with astonishing clearness. I remember when I was a child, and my father's accompanist, every time he sang the line "sic a day o' wind an' rain" in the Jacobite "Wae's me for Prince Charlie," I used to feel shivers of cold and wet run through my limbs.

Of the love songs in general one may say that they are best given in the Italian *bel canto*, smoothly flowing, suffused with a warm rapturous glow of feeling, rising in some cases to climaxes of passion, curving back again gradually to repose.

Lowland Scots Song, although not so rich in Laments as the Highland lore, has yet one or two classics. Of these, the ancient fragment, "The Flowers o' the Forest," wonderfully eked out by Jean Elliot, is easily first. The language of Jean Elliot's *restoration* is archaic, but for singing purposes it will suffice, omitting verses 2, 3, and 4, to sing only 1, 5, and 6. These contain the lament, which should be sung like a hypnotic Hebridean sea-sorrow. Were there ever more mesmeric sorrow-intoning lines than "Noo there is moanin' on ilka green loanin'" floating out on the austere beautiful melody, one of the finest Scotland has produced. Here feel and give full value to the *intrinsic* emotional and musical character of the *n*'s, *m*'s, and *l*'s, and also the vowel sounds, the *oo* of "noo," and the *o* of "moanin'" and "loanin'" divided by the shrill *ee* of "green."

Now, so far, all singers who have mastered the art of tone-production, normal phrasing, smooth clear articulation, and mood-colouring, and have grasped the

Continental nature of the slight Scottish deviations from English pronunciation (which I have tried to make clear in another pamphlet in this series),* will have no special difficulty in studying Scots Song.



But when we approach the character song and the dramatic narrative ballad in which one or more characters fall to be impersonated, or when we take up the lilt of various kinds and the songs written to the old "mouth-music" tunes, we are faced with particular problems of deviation from the normal, alike technical and artistic.

Now, as there are child-dandling and lulling songs in all traditional lore, and as the naïf nature of a child-dandling lilt is fairly easy to understand, let us look at the old cradle-song, "An' can ye sew cushions." One or two hints may be possible as to how to achieve its air of unsophisticated crooning. As diction affects the lilt, the rhythmic character of a croon, note (1) that *sew* is pronounced *shoo*, and thus is assonant with the *oosh* of *cushions*; (2) that the *n* of *an'*, *can*, *cushions*, should be unduly prolonged, robbing the time from the vowels. We thus get character by giving undue prominence (by duration) to the drowsy nasal consonant, instead of obeying strictly the normal law of pronunciation in singing, which demands artificial prolongation of vowel sounds only. That *normally* the prolongable consonants *m*, *n*, *l*, should *not* be prolonged where a vowel sound is available to receive the obligatory musical prolongation of the sound is understood in all good schools of singing.

But it cannot be too clearly grasped that characterisation in art is achievable *only* by deviation from the

* Booklet No. 8, *Lowland Scots Pronunciation*.

normal. And the artist will use such deviations quite consciously. For instance, in singing the word *crunch* in my own lowland adaptation of a humorous Island song, "The Bottachan," I not only unduly prolong the *r* but run half-way up a scale upon it before entering with the remaining *unch*. To do this musically, lightly, and easily (to sing it, in short, not grunt it !) demands a technique that can musically sustain a trilled *r* as easily and as long as any normally sustained tone on a vowel.

But to return to "Can ye sew cushions." Keep a steady rocking swing in it, feeling a second throb always on the dotted note of *can*, thus *ca-an*. At "hee and ba, birdie," sing quite sweetly and lightly the high note on *and*—do not make such high notes stick out ; do not underline or emphasise this one, either by tone or duration, else you will destroy the delicate character of the lilt. In the next section, the phrase "What 'l I do/wi ' ye " (in some editions the accent is erroneously shifted from *wi* to *ye*) illustrates the recurrence of the four equal throbbing beats that form so characteristic a feature of this naïf type in Hebridean song ; and here, in "Can ye sew cushions," (as in "The Handsome Lad frae Skye"—see "Two Milking Songs" in vol. 1 of "Songs of the Hebrides") let the  be felt as  in *mony o' ye*. Want of attention to such a seemingly small detail as this would destroy your lilt. But indeed how often singers sin in not feeling and obeying the unbeaten beats, the inside throbs of the rhythm.

"Can ye sew cushions" is not strictly a character song, but there should be a faint characterisation in it.

By characterisation I do not mean mimicry, but an identification of oneself with the emotional state of the character to be entered into. I once heard a singer give a little child's prayer with a white unformed voice, thus mimicing a child. To me it was blasphemous ! Instead of mimicing its immaturity, it was the *spirit* of childhood that should have been entered into. The even stresses on the four notes, and the *almost* evident throbs of



on the other hand, are sound musical means of suggesting such childlikeness, and are in no sense a caricature of untrained phrasing.

“ Mouth-music ” tunes such as those set to “ The Braes o’ Killiecrankie,” “ Tullochgorum,” or “ The Battle o’ Sheriffmuir ” call for a most adroit technique of light, clear, rapid articulation on an easy tone-production with a long - sustained breath - control. To achieve this, persevering study of consonants—analysed and repeated in practice—must be doggedly pursued. And on to this technique, when acquired, must be thrown subtle and rapidly changing characterisation. Burns’ enormously clever “ The Deil’s awa’ wi’ the Exciseman ” is almost of this class, but is not quite so cruel as to breathing exigencies, and brings us to the class of real character-impersonation songs. In “ The Deil’s awa’,” needless to say, the dance rhythm must be rigorously kept up throughout, only a slight slowing emphasis being allowed at the words “ but the ae best dance that e’er cam’ to oor land,” running back however instantly to the *tempo primo* at the words “ was ‘ the deil’s awa’ wi’ th’ exciseman ’.”


The narrative character song, with many verses to a repeated tune or chant, a genre in which Scotland is

unusually rich, is a convention which brings a scene before the mind's eye and introduces the characters and their doings in speech without stage dramatisation. Thus, "Get up and bar the door," sung by an independent narrator, introduces four characters, an old man and his wife and two strangers, on a cold, wet, dark night, in a lonely cottage on a moor.

"Tak' yer auld cloak aboot ye," introduces two characters, again an old man and his wife, this time on a bitterly cold winter morning, the scene described and the incidents narrated by the husband himself, the wife having also to be impersonated, singing alternate verses with the *gudeman*. "Last May a braw wooer," sung throughout by an artful maiden, tells her own love luring devices, bringing on the stage for a moment her wealthy lover. In "Tam Glen," a simple maiden gives us a glimpse of ancient hallowe'en customs as she pours into the ear of her sister the story of her love for a fine though poor young sweetheart and her vow never to marry the wealthy old suitor who has found favour with her parents.

As in the case of the last two songs, so in "There's nae luck about the hoose," there is really but one character impersonated throughout, the character of the narrator—in this case a harassed middle-aged married woman. She sings her love for her middle-aged husband, and sings it in unsurpassed love-language with vivid word-painting of scene and incident. Never have I known a song that more rapidly and vividly flashed into the mind all that the most subtle theatrical presentation could achieve. In this song the rhythmical lilt, the narration of incident, and the impersonation

of character have all to be made to run together in harness, and it is impossible in mere words to tell you how, subtly, to achieve this.

The opening scene must be imagined, just before the song begins—in the days prior to the telegram and daily post. A neighbour pushes open the door of a seafaring man's house and cries in "Your man's come hame!" The gudewife is busy at the housework or at the spinning along with her maidens. Beside herself with joy, and afraid to believe her own senses, she cries out "An' are ye *sure* the news is true, an' are ye *sure* he's weel." The dramatic and emotional necessities here over-ruling the metrical accent, we must give more stress to *sure* than to the bar accent syllable *are*, *i.e.*, we must lighten, minimise the natural bar accent, and give what we have thus robbed to *sure*. Then all is bustle and confusion. From this startled opening, somewhat hurriedly she bids "the jades fling by their wheel." "Is this a time to think o' work, An' Colin at the door ; Rax me my cloak, I'll to the quay, An' see him come ashore." The jerked excited short-long rhythm gives way in the end to the even stress on the words "rax me," etc., as I have marked them. This evenness of stress was thus frequently introduced by my father. It was an invaluable means of contrast and of emphasis in the repeating tune. Chopin uses it frequently with the portamento sign  in his strophic repetitions of an air. Much indeed can be learnt from Chopin's piano music in this matter of varying the repetitions of strophic song, since Chopin made great use of repeated melodies and was melodically under the influence of the singer's art. I remember being much struck with this

when I first recognised my father's devices in the nocturnes and other melodic works of the Polish composer.

To each verse of the song, "There's nae luck," follows the rhythmic refrain in which, to get the lilt, the word *nae* must be very sustained and the word *luck* sung as short as if spoken, the final consonant *k* holding up the traffic, as it were, until "about the hoose" is due. Sustain and crescendo *just* before and up to *luck*. The succeeding verses continue to depict the bustle of preparation to worthily receive Colin, until we arrive at the last verse, surely the most tenderly passionate ever put into the mouth of a middle-aged woman to her husband. This verse of the unspoken love-reverie type should be taken at a slower pace than the previous verses. Such a change of speed must occasionally be used in making the same air serve different moods, different mental states.

By the way, at Musical Festivals, when adjudicators praise a competitor for keeping up the time and marching through the rhythm with almost machine-like irrevocableness, the inexperienced singer is like to be so inflated with this special praise that he makes it ever after a sort of fetish and tramps through all sorts of delicate word-painting in song as if wound up and unable to hold the reins of his own rhythmic trot. Although an artist may *appear* to do something of the kind, he really never does. He can underline and colour certain words while yet carrying his public with him as if quite swept off their feet. But the point is—*the artist is never swept off his feet*; he is in control. I have heard songs of which the words were of the utmost importance thus gabbled through. Now a singer must always sing as though the

public did *not* know the song and did *not* have a book of words in hand. Indeed, I regard it as a questionable practice, that of supplying *all* the words of a song to an audience—their attention is apt to be divided between the book and the singer. It is apt to render singers lazy in articulation and audiences inattentive to interpretation.

Songs of married love (as also of married strife) are a strong feature of Scots Song. Lady Nairne's "Land o' the Leal" and Burns' "John Anderson my jo" are two of the finest. Full of tenderness and deep-seated passion, the words should float on the melodies with ethereal sweetness, almost as in love reverie, and, in the case of "The Land o' the Leal," with mystic ecstasy. A little-known song of Hugo Wolf's, "Wie glänzt der helle Mond" (one of the "Alte Weisen"), might be studied in this connection.

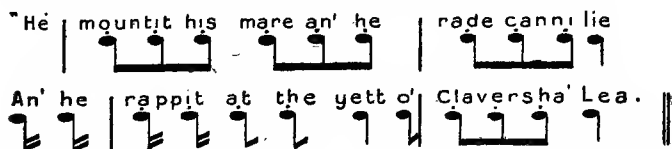
To go carefully and helpfully through the rendering of many Scots character songs would call for a fat volume (which I may write some day), but is not possible in a pamphlet. But I must at least refer to "Duncan Gray," "John Grumlie," "Hame cam' oor Gudeman," "Jenny dang the Weaver," "Hey, Jenny, come doon to Jock," "The Laird o' Cockpen," and "There cam' a young man to my daddie's door," in the humorous class, and "Barbara Allan," "The Bonnie Hoose o' Airlie," "The Bonnie Earl o' Moray," and "Lord Ronald my son," in the tragic class.

"There cam' a young man" is a scene and story, depicted by the heroine herself, liltingly, with laughter in her voice, laughter that is tinged with wistful regret, regret that her *braw* (from the French *brave*) young lad

had not shown more moral courage in his love-ordeal. It is a song earlier than Burns and on which he may have modelled his "Last May a braw wooer." The maiden herself here describes all that passed, sketching in vividly the different characters as they appear, and at the same time keeping up the lilt of the tune as mayhap to drown her own inner vexation. To attain the lilt of the refrain, note that the *m* of *cam'*—not the vowel *a*—fills up the time due to the syllable. But at the words "Gae, get ye gane, ye cauldrie wooer, ye sour, door-lookin', cauldrie wooer," the lilt must be suddenly held back as the maiden herself steps into the limelight and pronounces her ultimatum. Of course the words hurry on again in the next verse, leading on to the *denouement*.

To "The Laird o' Cockpen" were added two spurious verses. I advise that it be sung as Lady Nairne herself left it. The added verses derail the song, they change its whole meaning.

In singing this song, my father introduced a little bit of musical realism into the rhythm at :



keeping the 6/8 quavers at a very even trot, indicating thus the perfunctory nature of the Laird's attitude to this merely social question of marriage, a question which neither flustered himself nor affected the jog-trot of his mare. And at the words *rappit at*, my father gave two sharply hit semi-quavers which sounded like a rat-tat

at the knocker of the door. The even trot was taken up again when, after his most unexpected refusal and momentary dumfounderment, the song goes on to tell how he again mounted,

"an | aften he thocht as he | gaed thro' the glen

—here, after a short pause in which to whip up his mare in disgust, my father (using the pause as a justification of the acceleration) rode and sang more furiously to the end.


"Barbara Allan" is a tragic ballad in which, in true ballad style, the narrator takes no part in the scenes enacted. The opening words :—

" 'Twas in and about the Mart'mas time,

When the green leaves they were a-fallin',"

should not be sung as mere callous narrative, they should have a latent colour of dolour portending the tragic end. And yet these lines must not be dragged in the slightest degree—there must indeed be a throb of hurrying feet in their rhythm even before the love-sick Grahame "sends his man doon thro' the toon to the place where his love was dwellin'." In her words, "Young man, I think ye're dyin'" we must hear the cold harshness of offended *amour propre*, which is blinding her to the fact that she still passionately loves the man she is coldly scorning. As she wends her way homeward to the "jow o' the dead bell ringin'," the throb of fate still pursues her. But at the words, "Oh mither, mither, mak' my bed, an' mak' it saft an' narrow," the artificial tension suddenly gives way, and with the cry "Sin' my love dee'd for me the day, I'll dee for him to-morrow," the curtain falls on the now heart-broken maiden.

A very old and very wide-spread ballad theme finds expression in "Lord Ronald my son," one of many old songs in duologue form. The most condensed form of this theme I know is a fragment we call "A soothing croon from Eigg" in our Hebridean collection. The beautiful melody associated with the tragedy in the Lowland version is probably of Highland origin. The hypnotism of this beautiful melody must be allowed its full power of communicating to singer and audience alike the tragic eeriness of the mother's questions and the son's replies, and with this hint we must leave the task of the double impersonation and its terrible implications to the imagination of the singer.

We have said nothing of the numerous class of songs in the martial spirit. Of these "Scots wha ha'e wi' Wallace bled" stands easily at the head. By Burns, it has none of the dare-devil almost rollicking fighting incitement of Scott's "March, March" and his "Bonnie Dundee," or of some even of Hogg's Jacobite songs, in which there is surely pardonable a certain swagger of rhythm. "Scots wha ha'e" is grandiose, certainly, but honestly earnest and solemn unto death. My father sang it as the prayer and vow of a whole nation. Note that the melody here (used elsewhere in a smooth-flowing version for "The Land o' the Leal") is full of the rousing rhythm:— and that the jerk here used, which has been dubbed a Scotticism in rhythm, is nevertheless a universal—a fundamental—musical means of rousing from lassitude into activity, martial or otherwise. How each and all of these martial songs might be sung I could indicate only in a fully-

edited version of the songs themselves. But I can here at least try to impress upon singers that there are no *un*-important details in art, and that every detail arises from an inner necessity, from the need to express the particular mood, the mental state of each song, a mood which is revealed or obscured by just such details, details which might seem—to one who did not enter deeply enough into the matter—to be merely arbitrary.

In another pamphlet in this *series I have dealt with the Scots pronunciation of “Scots wha ha’e.” This matter of the jerked rhythm, I have stated there, may—indeed must at times—be reversed, as for instance at the word *battle* which we should take short-long instead of long-short, whilst at “Proud Edward’s power” the *snap* would be for the time entirely in abeyance. So again at “Scotland’s King and Law,” and also at “freeman.” But note, *speak* the word “but” in “but they shall be free,” *i.e.*, do not here prolong the vowel but close instantly on the consonant, and so have the advantage of a short silence before “they shall be free.” In the last half-verse, again, let the last three syllables “’surper low,” “ev’ry foe,” “ev’ry blow,” be quite even, unjerked, undotted, lending a determined decision to the utterance. And for the word “liberty” one may use either the short-long or the long-short for “liber’”; but certainly at “Let us do or dee” take the rhythmic arrangement I have pictured.

“Scots wha hae” is a character song. In it Bruce is speaking. But there are songs in which the poet, in his own character, speaks to his audience direct. Of such is

*Book 8, *Lowland Scots Pronunciation*.

Burns' "A man's a man for a' that" and his "Green grow the rushes O." Of such also is Hogg's "When the kye comes hame" and Ballantyne's "Ilka blade o' grass." These may all be frankly sung to the audience, unlike the songs of detached characterisation or of quasi-hypnotic reverie.

"Green grow the rushes O," with its youthful, joyful swing, may at first sight seem to have been better included among the lilts—the refrain is certainly lilting. But words packed so full of meaning as those of Burns (or those of the wonderful "Birlinn of Clanranald," Songs of the Hebrides, vol. 3) cannot be rushed through. They must be given sufficient weight. Thus, my father sang all the verses of the "Rushes O" at a deliberately slower tempo than the lilting refrains.

What the majority mean nowadays by the term *folk-song* has not been defined—only faddists think they can generalise as to its performance—but certainly rich poetic stuff of this kind has never been given in brainy Scotland with a milk-and-water flaccidity such as seems to be the mistaken ideal of a certain class of sophisticated singers in the cities to-day.

Ballantyne's "Ilka blade o' grass" would be sung with a straightforward gentle simplicity—not because it is a folk-song (?) but because the gentle mood of cheerful resignation and hope inculcated in it is best expressed so. And probably the old air to which the poet wrote the words suggested to him the mood.

Hogg's "Come all ye jolly shepherds," like the "Rushes O" in spirit, but with words not so pregnant in meaning, *can* be given throughout with a joyous

swing (somewhat like Hugo Wolf's "Fussreise"), verse and refrain alike in *tempo* and spirit.

And now, lastly, "A man's a man for a' that," one of the greatest songs of its genre ever written, should be conceived, I hold, in a mood of dignified radiant self-reliance, without a shadow of whine or self-pity, nor a gleam of envy or bitterness, making not too much of "D'ye see yon birkie ca'd a Lord" (after all the sentiment here is now an anachronism: the strutting and staring species at whose word hundreds worshipped having died out with the nineteenth century, Burns need not have written so had he lived to-day) but keeping steadily before the mind the vision of the rising sun of the day that is to come "when man to man the warld o'er shall brithers be an' a' that."

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