

My Singing Bird

I have seen the lark soar high at morn,
Heard his song up in the blue.
I have heard the blackbird pipe his notes,
The thrush and linnet too.

Chorus:

But there's none of them can sing so sweet,
My singing bird as you.
Ah, Ah,
My singing bird as you.

If I could lure my singing bird
From his own cosy nest,
If I could catch my singing bird
I would warm him on my breast.

Chorus:

But there's none of them can sing so sweet,
My singing bird as you.
Ah, Ah,
My singing bird as you.

Oh, I will climb a high, high tree
And I'll rob a wild birds nest
And I'll bring back my singing bird
To the arms that love him best.

Chorus

But there's none of them can sing so sweet,
My singing bird as you.
Ah, Ah,
My singing bird as you.

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*Gaol ise gaol i (She is my love, my love is she)*¹

Hao ri a hù o
Ro ho hì o hì o

Gaol ise gaol i
E ho hì ò hì o
Hao ri a hù o
Ro ho hì o hì o

Gaol Anna Nighean Nìll
Gura mise thug an gràdh
Do dh' fhear buidhe chùil bhàin
Bheirinn comhairle bhuam
Do nighean gun ghruaim
Gun i thoirt a gaol buan
Neo gu fàg e buidh a gruidh
Mis' ag obair le tàl
'S mis' ag obair le snàth
Air an anart chaol bhàn

Men

Ladies:

Translation

Hæ ree ah hoo oh /ro ho hee oh hee oh
She is my love, my love is she
Eh ho hee oh hee oh / Hæ ree ah hoo oh /ro ho hee oh hee oh
My love, Anna daughter of Niall
I have given such love
To the fair-haired man
I would give counsel
To a carefree girl
Not to give her lasting love
Or else it will leave her cheek jaundiced;
Me working with an adze
And I working with thread
On the fine white linen.

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¹ From the recording by Alan Lomax from Catriona A. MacMillan, Daliburgh, South Uist, 1951.

The Spinning Wheel Song

1. Mellow the moonlight to shine is beginning,
Close by the window young Eileen is spinning
Bent o'er the fire her blind grandmother is sitting,
Crooning and moaning and drowsily knitting.
'Eileen a' chara I hear someone tapping,'
'Tis the ivy, dear Mother, against the glass flapping.'
'Eileen I surely hear somebody sighing—'
'Tis the sound, Mother, dear, of the autumn winds dying.'

Chorus:--

Merrily, cheerily, noisily whirring,
Swings the wheel, spins the wheel while the foot's stirring
Sprightly and lightly and airily ringing
Sounds the sweet voice of the young maiden singing.

2. What's that noise that I hear at the window, I wonder?
Tis the little birds chirping the holly bush under.'
'What makes you keep shoving and moving your stool on,
And singing all wrong the old song of the Coolin?'
There's a form at the casement, the form of her true love.
He whispers with face bent 'I'm waiting for you love,
Get up on the stool, through the lattice step lightly
And we'll rove in the grove while the moon's shining brightly.
- 3 The maid shakes her head, on her lips lays a finger,
Steals up from the stool, longs to go, and yet lingers,
A frightened glance steals at her drowsy grandmother,
Puts one foot on the stool, swings the wheel with the other.
Lazily, easily, swings now the wheel round,
Slowly and lowly is heard now the reel's sound,
Noiseless and light to the lattice above her
The maid steps and leaps to the arms of her lover.

Last chorus:

Slower, and slower, and slower the wheel swings,
Lower and lower, and lower the reel rings,
Ere the reel and the wheel stopped their ringing and moving
Through the grove the young lovers by moonlight are roving.

Hi Horo 's na Horo Eile

[John MacLean, the Balimartin bard, Tìree²]

Hi horo 's na ho ro èile
Hi horo 's na ho ro èile
Hi horo 's na ho ro èile
Gur tu mo luiadh ri m' bheò cha cheil mi.

Nuair a bha mi 'm chaileig ghòraich,
Thug mi gaol is gràdh do'n oigear
Aig am bheil a' phearsa bhòidheach;
'S cha ghradhaich mi ri m' bheò fear eile.

Do chùl dualach, cuachadh, bhòidheach;
Falt do chin mar it' an lòn-duibh;
Do dha ghruaidh air dhreach nan ròsan
'S iad fo dhealta ceò na maidne.

Tha do chalpa cuimir, dìreach,
Mar bhradan aibhne 'ruith gu fìor-ghlan;
'S gura fìor gu'n d'thug mi luaidh dhuit
Measg na bheil de shluadh air thalamh.

Ach tha mis' 'an duil 's 'an dòchas,
Gu'n tig an là 's am bi sinn còmhla;
'S ma bhios tusa dìleas dhomhsa,
Cha ghradhaich mi ri m' bheò fear eile.

CHORUS....You are my love, I'll never forsake you as long as I live

1. When I was a foolish girl/I have love and affection to the youth/ Who has a lovely personality / I shall never love another in my life.
2. Your curly beautiful lock / Your hair dark as the blackbird's feathers/ Your cheeks like the roses / In the mist of the morning dew.
3. Your legs are shapely and straight/Like the trout in the river running smoothly /It's true that I have love you /best out of all the people on earth
4. I expect and hope /that the day will come we'll be together / And if you will be faithful to me/ I will never love another as long as I live.

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² he also composed *Calum Beag* (about his neighbour) & *Breacan Mairi Uisdein*. mid-19th c.

From Newfoundland

A chailin dhuinn bhon dh'fhàg thu mi
I'm not at all in fun with you
Chaidh mi chall nam braisd an dé
And that's the way we used to be

You were bonnie, you were bright
You were handsome and polite
Although you were so very nice
You don't intend to marry me

If I had wings like a dove
I would fly the air above
I would go and see my love
Who left me dull this evening

When I saw you in the boat
You made my heart so sick and sore
And when I saw you on the shore
I then went home to grieve for you

Many a night when I came home
Sitting down a while alone
Looking over at your home
And thinking of my dearest one

Many's the race that I had run
Since the day I first begun
But I will do the best I can
To rig a plan of leaving you

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[Brown-haired girl, since you left me.... I got lost in the woods yesterday...]

Below is a comparative version of a Scots song that turns up in the Greig-Duncan Collection as 'It's mony's the Race that I have Run'

The tune is in a strathspey rhythm and lines one and three of the chorus are mostly nonsense. While the tune almost identical to a macaronic song I recorded in

Newfoundland in 1971, the garbled chorus lines sound like an attempt to reproduce the Gaelic lines in the same song.

*Wi' my hallin toons come chraga me
I'm not at all in fun to thee
But hav ye gowkin brachin doot
And that's the way we used to be*

The comparative Newfoundland version was sung by 82 year-old Allan MacArthur whose people emigrated from Canna and Moidart before the mid-nineteenth century:

*A chailin dhuinn bhon dh'fhàg thu mi
I'm not at all in fun with you
Chaidh mi chall nam braisd an dé
And that's the way we used to be*

NOTE:

The Newfoundland Gaels settled in the Codroy Valley in the south-west of the island along side French, English, Irish and Micmac settlers. Though the Gaelic was retained remarkably well, by the start of the First World War English was gradually becoming the common language of the community due to intermarriage. The process was accelerated by the installation of electricity in 1962, the advent of television within a year, and the completion of the Trans-Canada Highway in 1966. The groups socialised regularly and, as a result, several locally composed macaronic songs, including this one, were in circulation by the turn of the 20th century.

The two verses in Greig-Duncan, 'It's mony's the race that I have run...' and 'If I had wings like a dove...' are very close to two of the six verses from Newfoundland. It is possible that a fragment of the song migrated to Scotland from Newfoundland via the steady traffic of sea-farers back and forth across the Atlantic.

REFERENCE

- Bennett, Margaret. *The Last Stronghold: Scottish Gaelic Traditions in Newfoundland*, St. John's and Edinburgh, 1989, pp. 172 - 73
- Bennett, Margaret. 'Scottish Gaelic, English, and French: Some Aspects of the Macaronic Traditions of the Codroy Valley, Newfoundland' in *Regional Languages Studies... Newfoundland*, St. John's, Newfoundland, May 1972, pp. 25-30.

Mary Mac

1.

There's a nice wee lass an her name is Mary Mac
Mak nae mistak' she's the lass Ah'm gaun tae tak
A lot o ither fella's want tae get upon her tracks
So Ah think Ah'm gaun tae huvtae get up early

CHORUS

For Mary Mac's mither's makin Mary Mac mairry me
An' my mither's makin me mairry Mary Mac
Ah'm gaun tae mairry Mary tae get Mary tae tak care o me
We'll a' be makin merry when Ah mairry Mary Mac.

2.

Noo Mary an her mither gang an awfu lot thegither
In fact ye very seldom see the ane wi'oot the ither;
The fellas often wonder if it's Mary or her mither
Or the baith o them thegither that Ah'm coortin.

3.

Noo the weddin's oan a Wednesday an ivrything's arranged,
Her name'll soon be changed tae mine, unless her min' be changed
Ah'm makin the arrangements, Ah'm jist aboot deranged,
For mairrage is an awfu undertakin.

4.

It's shair tae be a grand affair, aye, grander than a fair,
A coach an pair for rich an poor an every pair that's there
We'll dine upon the finest fair, Ah'm shair tae git ma share,
An if a don't Ah'm very much mistaken.

Gur Milis Mòrag

Gur milis Mòrag, gur lagach Mòrag
Gur milis Mòrag, nighean Eògahinn òig.

'S i Mòr an àilleachd, 's i laogh a màthar
'S e bhith ga tàladh, mo rogha ceòil.

Gur mi bhiodh uallach, air ruith nan gruagach

Ach Tormod Ruadh, a bhith fuar fon fhòid.

Mo mhìle marbhaisg air an Fhrangach
Nuair leig e nall thu, chur an-tlachd oirnn.

Sweet is Morag, lovely is Morag/ Sweet is Morag, daughter of young Ewan

Morag is the beauty, her mother's darling, Lulling her is my choice music.

Your mother's darling, your family's beloved one,

My thousand curses on the French, who let you away, to come back and cause us grief.

Bu Chaomh Leam Bhith Mireadh

Bu chaomh leam bhith mireadh, bhith mireadh, bhith mireadh,
Bu chaomh leam bhith mireadh ri mo chailin donn òg;
Bu chaomh leam bhith mireadh 's ri taobh dhèanainn suidhe,
Mo ghaol air a bilean 'n àm sireadh a pòig.

An cluinn thu mi, fhleasgaich, na bith ann an cabhaig
'S gun gabh thu mo leisgeul, 's chaneil mi ach òg;
Nach gabh thu mo leisgeul, 's i'n fhìrinn a sheasas;
Tha mise an teagamh gur beag leat mo stòr.

Gur mise bhiodh briathrach nan rachadh tu 'n iar leam,
'S nan tigeadh mo cheud-ghragh a nuas o'n a' chrò;
'S gun s siùbhlamaid thairis air Rudha na Caillich,
'S gun dèanamaid banais air am biodh farum is ceòl.

Bidh tusa le aighear cur rian feadh na dachaigh,
'S bidh mise gu h-ealanta a' sireadh dhut lòn;
Bheir mi fiadh as an fhìreach is iasg as an linne;
Bidh liathchearc mu'n teine 's nach ann oirnn' bhios an dòigh.

THE PRESSERS

Oh, there's naught in this wide world but sorrow and care
I weary on Johnnie, for my Johnnie's no there
Sae waesome and dowie, I feel like tae dee

For the pressers hae stolen my Johnnie fae me

Chorus:

When I look tae yon high hills, my laddie's no' there
When I look tae yon high hills, it maks my heart sair
When I look tae yon high hills, a tear blin's my e'e
For the lad I lo'e dearly lies a distance fae me.

I look a' roon the steading, but Johnnie's nae there
I toil in the hairst field, my hert feels sae sair
At night I lie waukin and weary's can be,
For the pressers hae stolen my true love fae me

And it's far ower the hills an' hyne ower the sea
I wist no whaur my ain dear laddie might be,
On some foreign battlefield, maybe he'll dee
My curse on ye, Boney, ye've ta'en Johnnie fae me.

Oh the bonnie lark's singin mocks me in my care
But I'll keep on still hoping till grey be my hair
Oh, ye wanton winds blowing far ower the sea
Oh could ye not waft my dear laddie tae me?

Hù a hù Ailein Duinn—My Bonnie Light Horseman

Hù a hù Ailein Duinn/Ailein Duinn bhòidhich

'S a hù a hù Ailein Duinn. /Handsome Alan Donn

1.

Ailein Duinn a' chùl dualaich / Alan Donn with the lovely hair
Bhuidhe chuachagaich bhòidhich / Yellow and very curly.

2

Ailein Duinn a' chul bhuidhe/ Alan Donn of the yellow hair
Bhith 'gad chùmhach 's tu brònach./ Lamenting for you in your sorrow.

3

'S truagh nach robh mi 's an fhiabhras/ Pity I wasn't sick with fever
Man d'fhuair mi riamh beò thu / Before I ever found you alive.

The Bonnie Light Horseman

It's three years and six months since he left this fair shore,
My bonnie light horseman I'll see never more
He mounted his horse, looking gallant and free
In the whole of the regiment there was none quite like he.

Broken hearted I wander for the loss of my true lover
He's the bonnie light horseman, in the war he's been slain.

When Boney commanded his army to stand
He levelled his cannons all over the land
He levelled his cannons his victory to gain
And he slew my light horseman sae far fae his hame.

The dove she laments for her mate as she flies
'Oh where, tell me where is my darling?' she cries,
'Oh where in this world is there one to compare
With my bonnie Light Horseman, so young, strong and fair?'

If I were a small bird with my wings I could fly,
I would fly o'er the salt sea to where my true love lies,
And with my fond wings I'd beat over his breast
And I'd lay myself down by the one I love best.

Broken hearted I wander, broken hearted I'll remain,
For my bonnie light hoesman in the war he's been slain.

Tuireadh Iain Ruaidh

[Lament John Roy]

[composed by Edward Purcell, 1891 – 1964, tune based on a pibroch of the same title]

Seist/Chorus:

Thug thu dhìoms' a' ghrian 'san speur

You took from me the sun in the heavens

Faill-ill-o-hug-o-ro-é

Spion thu asam mùirn mo chléibh

You tore from me the joy of my breast

Faill-ill-o-hug-o-ro-éile

1.

Gheall mo ghràdh dhomh siòda 's sròl

My love promised me silks and satins

Còmhdach riòmhadh 's seudan òir

Fine clothing and golden jewels

Gheall e mire 's blasdachd beòil

He promised me mirth and sweetness of lips [mouth]

'S caithream chlàr a dhùisgeas òrain

And the music of harps that awakens songs

2.

Fuar a chré air réidh a' bhlàir

Cold his body on the plain of battle

Fàth mo bhroin is cùis mo chràth;

The reason for my sorrow and the cause of my anguish

Dìomhain deòir a ruith chun làir

In vain are tears which run to the ground

Dìomhain cridh' nach diùltadh annsachd

In vain is the heart that never refused love,

3.

Cò om faigh mi biadh air bòrd?

Who will provide food on the table?

Thréig mo shòlas 's 'm àileachd neòil;

My joy and fair complexion have gone;

Thréig mo stiùir, mo ràmh, mo sheòl,

Gone are my helm, my oar, my sail

Dh'imich saoidh nan dualan òr-bhuidh'

My hero of the golden-yellow locks has departed

