

**THE IRISH MELODIES: THE
ORIGINAL AIRS RESTORED
AND ARRANGED FOR THE
VOICE; OP.60**

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The Irish Melodies: The Original Airs Restored and Arranged for the Voice; Op.60 by Charles Villiers Stanford & Thomas Moore

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CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD & THOMAS MOORE

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The
Irish Melodies
of
THOMAS MOORE

The original airs restored

and arranged for the VOICE

(with Pianoforte accompaniment)

BY
CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD.

Op. 60.



Price 5/- net.

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TO MY OLD FRIEND

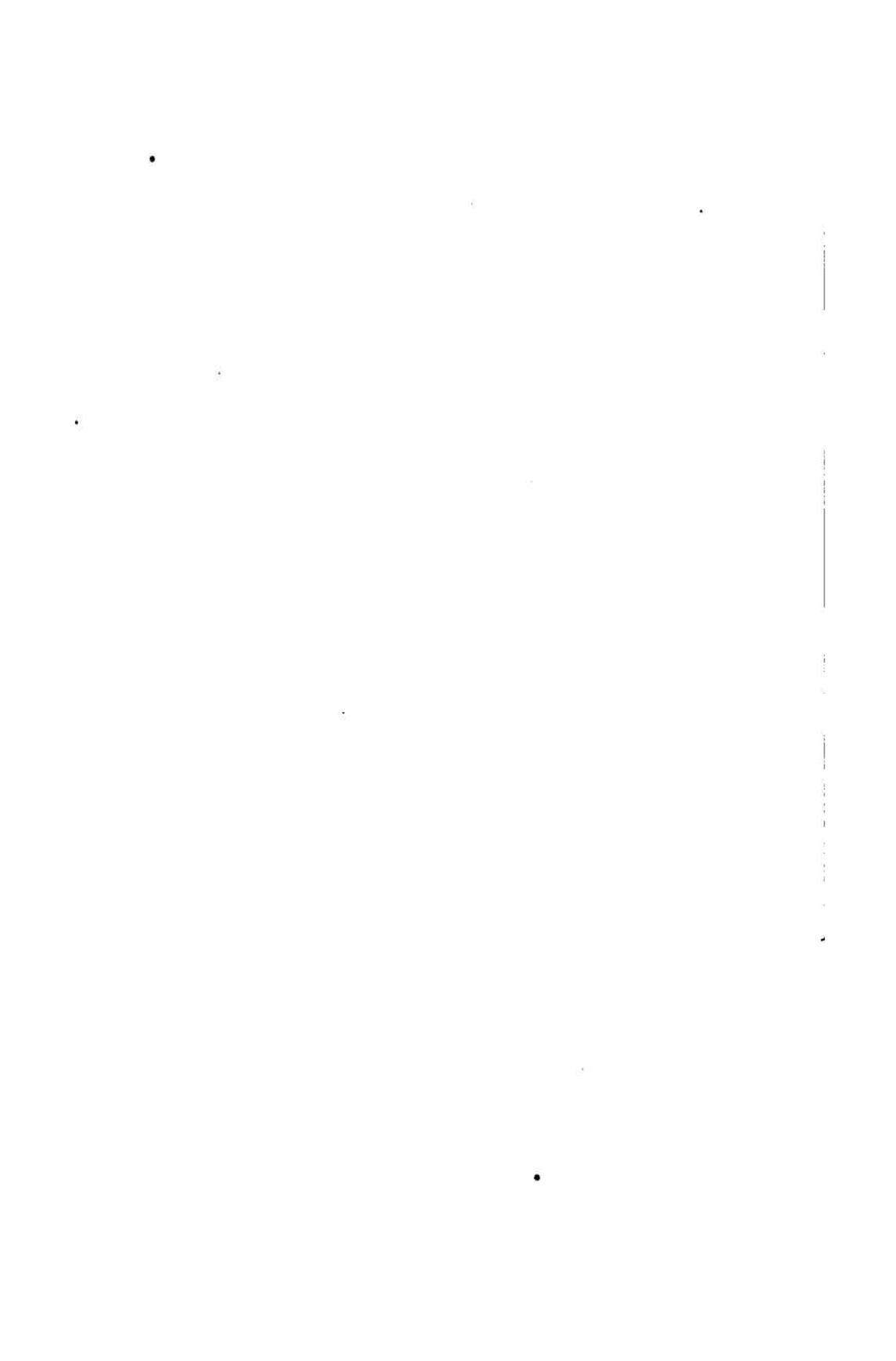
JOSEPH ROBINSON

I AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATE THIS WORK.

NOVEMBER 1894

C. V. S.

Copy of Papers of Joseph Robinson



PREFACE.

I have long wished for an opportunity, which has now happily arrived, of laying before the musical public an edition of the Irish Melodies of Thomas Moore, in which the airs could be given in an accurate form as noted by such excellent antiquarians as Bunting and Petrie. I have been able, thanks to the authorities of the British Museum and more especially to the able help of Mr. Barclay Squire who presides over the musical section of its library, to examine also the rare collections of Burke Thumoth, Carolan, and Holden. To this last Moore undoubtedly was (after Bunting) the most indebted.

While it is impossible to over-rate the value of much of Moore's work, both as containing masterpieces of lyrical writing, and as being the first popular presentation of the Folk-songs of Ireland, it must be remembered that the age in which they were published was not one of the golden periods of British Music, and that accuracy of detail was scarcely to be expected at a time when knowledge of the subject was very limited. In any strictures which I have felt compelled to pass on the poet and his arranger, Sir John Stevenson, this point must be kept in view, and it must be freely conceded that neither before nor since Moore's time has there been any Irish poet who so completely combined fineness of workmanship with spirit and pathos of expression.

As will be seen in the notes I have appended to the airs at the end of the volume, there is scarcely a melody which Moore left unaltered, and, as a necessary consequence, unspoil. Whether he or his arranger was responsible for these corruptions is a matter which is lost to history; but as the name of the poet has the greater prominence in the original publication, I have laid to his door any blame which I am compelled to allot. Stevenson, a remarkable musician, who though resident all his life in Ireland was well read in foreign music, was much under the influence of the works of Haydn: and he seems to have imported into his arrangements a dim echo of the style of the great Austrian composer. He could scarcely have chosen a model more unsuited for the wildness and ruggedness of the music with which he had to deal. This probably led to the alterations of scales and characteristic intervals (such as the flat seventh) which are the life and soul of Irish melodies. Some airs are, owing to long usage in the form in which they first were dressed, almost hopelessly spoiled: as an instance I may mention "The Last Rose of Summer" (The Groves of Blarney), the original of which is to be found in Holden's collection. Moore has assisted this transmutation, by supplying words often beautiful in themselves, but quite out of keep-

ing with the style of the airs, such as sentimental poems for jig-tunes, dirges for agricultural airs, battle-hymns for reels. Such errors of judgment were incapable of alteration, save by a sacrifice of the words in a collection which was intended as a complete presentation both of the music and Moore's work: and I am bound to admit that in a few instances, such as "Let Erin remember" and "Oh ye dead", the melodies are so intrinsically fine and so versatile in their adaptability to various sentiments, as to endure the change of character without loss of expressiveness.

Some few of the "Melodies" I have omitted, because they are not Irish at all. These are "Evelcen's Bower", "Believe me if all those endearing young charms", and "Oh the Shamrock". I have also omitted "By that Lake" and "Alone in crowds", because the airs assigned to them are identical with those of "O breathe not his name" and "I wish I were by that dim lake".

For the accompaniments I can only say that they are frankly modern. As the melodies themselves were seldom or ever imagined from any but a monophonic standpoint, polyphony must be an interloper, no matter what its style. Therefore I have adopted a free form, while preserving in all cases the scale of the melody; for my view is (and I admit that there are two sides to the question) that the more vivid and the more in accordance with the spirit of the present age they can be made, the better their chance of bringing the force of the melodies home to the listener. The airs are for all time, their dress must vary with the fashion of a fraction of time.

For the rest I have only to express my thanks to the authorities of the British Museum, and to Mr. Joseph Robinson, the pioneer in the art of musicianly arrangement of the music of Ireland, who most kindly allowed me to use his admirable phrasing of the "Minstrel Boy" in this volume. I may conclude with a maxim as to the proper vocal rendering of the tunes, which is well-known to all born Irishmen; that the tendency is always to make a short pause (almost chorale-fashion) at the close of a line, and never to be so strict in *tempo* as to sacrifice the exigencies of breath or to spoil the point of a phrase.

C. V. Stanford.

London, November 1894.

CONTENTS.

<i>Name of Song</i>	<i>Old Air</i>	<i>Page</i>	<i>Name of Song</i>	<i>Old Air</i>	<i>Page</i>
After the battle	Thy fair bosom	62	Love's young dream	The old woman	74
And doth not a meeting like this	<i>Unknown</i>	202	My gentle harp	The caoine or dirge	144
As a beam o'er the face of the waters	The young man's dream	22	Nay, tell me not, dear	Dennis, don't be threat- ening	86
As slow our ship	The Girl I left behind me	148	Ne'er ask the hour	My husband's journey to Portugal gone	170
As vanquished Erin	The Boyne Water	206	No, not more welcome	Luggelaw	124
At the mid hour of night	Molly, my dear	96	O think not my spirits	John O'Reilly the active	16
Avenging and bright	Cruchan na feine	88	Oh! Arranmore	Kilndroughalt fair	236
Before the battle	The fairy Queen	60	Oh! banquet not	Pianxy Irwin	187
Come o'er the sea	Cuisleha machree	150	Oh! Blame not the bard	Kitty Tyrrel	52
Come, rest in this bosom	Lough Sheelling	134	Oh! Breathe not his name	The brown maid	7
Come, send round the wine	We brought the Summer with us	42	Oh, could we do with this world	Basket of oysters	242
Dear harp of my country	New Langoloe	142	O'Donoghue's mistress	The little and great mountain	182
Desmond's song	<i>Unknown</i>	208	Oh! Doubt me not	Yellow Wat and the fox <i>Unknown origin</i>	165
Drink of this cup	Paddy O'Rafferty	178	Oh! For the swords	"Shielsa na gaira"	110
Drink to her	Heigho! My Jacky	50	Oh! Had we some bright little lale	Oh, the sight entrancing Oh, where's the slave	192
Echo	The Wren	188	Oh, ye dead!	Down beside me	131
Erin, oh Erin	I am asleep and don't waken me	46	Oh music	A plough tune	180
Erin! The tear and the smile in thine eyes	Allenee Aroon	5	Oh bumper at parting!	The Banks of Banua	68
Fairest put on awhile	Cummlun	108	Quick! We have but a second	Moll Bae in the morning	98
Farewell! But whenever you welcome the hour	Moll Roone	112	Remember these	Paddy O'Snap	200
Fill the bumper fair	Bob and Joan	140	Remember the glories of Erian the brave	Castle Throvan	152
Fly not yet	Pianxy Kelly	14	Rich and rare were the gems she wore	Molly Mc Alpin	3
Forget not the field	The lamentation of Anghrim	182	Sail on, sail on	The summer is coming	18
From this hour the pledge is given	Ranard'ne	248	Shall the harp then be silent	The humming of the Ban Macfarlane's lament- ation	172
Go where glory waits thee Has sorrow thy young days shaded	Maid of the valley	1	She is far from the land	Open the door softly	84
How dear to me the hour How oft has the bentshee cried	Sly Patrick	122	She sung of love	The Munster man	214
I'd mourn the hopes that leave me	The twisting of the rope	26	Silence is in our festal halls	The green woods of Truigha	250
If thou'lt be mine	The dear black maid	32	Sing, sing, music was given Sing, sweet harp	The old Langoloe	218
Ill omens	The Rose tree	118	Song of Inisfail	<i>Unknown</i>	230
In the morning of life	The winnowing sheet	157	Song of the battle eve	Peggy bawn	222
I saw from the beach	Kitty of Coleraine	54	St. Senanus and the lady	The Cruiskeen lawn	222
I saw thy form	The little harvest rose	146	Sublime was the warning	The brown thorn	168
It is not the tear	Miss Molly	139	Sweet Inisfailen	The black joke	44
I've a secret to tell thee	Donnel O'Greadh	82	Take back the virgin page	The captivating youth	194
I wish I was by that dim lake Lay his sword by his side Leebia hath a beaming eye Let Erin remember the da of old	The Sixpence	70	The dream of those days	I love you above all the rest	247
Love and the novice	Oh southern breeze	228	The fortune teller	Open the door softly	178
	Shale Aroon	212	The harp that once thro' Tara's halls	Molly my treasure	9
	If the sea were ink	238	The Irish peasant to his mistress	I once had a true love	86
	Nora Orlain	80			
	The little red fox	38			
	Black-headed deary	92			