

**ANCIENT BALLADS AND SONGS,
CHIEFLY FROM TRADITION,
MANUSCRIPTS, AND SCARCE WORKS;
WITH BIOGRAPHICAL AND ILLUSTRATIVE
NOTICES, INCLUDING ORIGINAL POETRY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649052998

Ancient ballads and songs, chiefly from tradition, manuscripts, and scarce works; with biographical and illustrative notices, including original poetry by Thomas Lyle

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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THOMAS LYLE

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By THOMAS LYLE.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR L. BELFE, 13, CORNHILL;
WESTLEY AND TYRREL, DUBLIN; CONSTABLE AND CO. EDINBURGH;
AND JOHN LUMSDEN, GLASGOW.

M.DCCC.XXVII.

PREFACE.

As opportunities presented, during the casual intervals of relaxation allowed the Editor from more immediate studies and pursuits, he has been wont to amuse himself, by gathering together, from various sources occasionally placed within his reach, the materials from which the three first sections of the present work have been arranged; and now, since these are about to be laid before the public, he hopes it will not be deemed over-presumptive upon his part, at this time to hazard the remark, that, were their respective merits to be estimated by the care and pains which have already been bestowed by him, in rendering them acceptable to a few admirers and patrons of this department of lyrical composition, his well-meant attempts to while away the tedium of an idle hour, with those who may not consider varieties such as the following, beneath their notice, will not then by him be deemed to have been futile, nor his hitherto labours to please them, abortive.

Reader, have you ever watched, or haply accompanied the youth in his devious rambles through the glen, as, in boyhood's dawning morn, he culled from the luxuriant herbage, opening upon the fairy prospect around him, a blossom of every hue that Flora garlands her Spring mantle with? If so, you never will forget, while life's pulse continues to vibrate warm within you, the glowing recollections which that lovely morning's perambulation hath left behind it, upon memory's track. From the margin of the still pool beneath the linn, the youthful enthusiast gathers the white and the yellow water-lilies, leaving the less inviting iris and the arrow-leaved water-plantain, to preside over the blooming grot or dingle's recess, during the absence of the fair nymphs of the burn; the rose-bay willow, scarlet campion, and paler saxifrage, are anon gathered by him from the streamlet's dimpled margin; the daffodil, golden-cup, and various coloured violets, perfuming and scentless, from the shelving bank above; while the marshy mossy spot hollowed beneath the shadowing mountain ash-tree, fringed over with heather-bell and polypody, next afford him the light and the deep blooming speckled orchis, the yellow asphodel, and the pink-eyed sundew. Not yet satiated with young Summer's offerings, the ambitious little urchin scales the summit of his elysium, studded over with the changeful milk-wort, and adds to his posie, the blue gentian, the eye-bright, the deep gold and carmine streaked St. John's wort, and the Alpine

scorpion grass of ethereal blue, with a golden star in its breast: so, having gathered his nosegay, and wreathed it round with a limber twig of meadow-sweet, or a tendril of woodbine, he returns home, and exultingly presents the treasure to his delighted parents, who forthwith are invited to rejoice with him in their turn, as he tells over, one by one, the various dyed blossoms, and enumerates the different localities of strath and fell, from whence he so lately collected them.

Time steals on apace, till life's meridian has settled over him; yet all the storms and vicissitudes with which fortune alternately has assailed his course, while journeying onward to this goal, cannot efface the sunny spots, which, of yore, kept hallowing and playing around his childhood's fancy, nor dim the pristine recollection which erst had called them forth into existence, and now matured them with manhood.

Even so, it fares with the legendary lore of Ballad and Song, which has been painted and impressed upon the young and susceptible mind, by the maiden, mother, or matron, who watched over our dawning years, while

“ We danced our infancy upon their knees,”

which grew with our growth, and strengthened with our

this will be considered as the most interesting Section of the work. It ever will remain the Editor's most earnest wish, that the unpublished remains of this nearly forgotten Scottish poet, should, at some time or other, form a separate publication; and with the public, whose will in these matters is often tantamount to a law, it now rests to decide, whether or not this task should yet be attempted by him. The Editor, after having transcribed the whole of Sir William's recovered manuscript poetry, with the exception of his psalmody, and read each specimen individually and repeatedly over, is inclined to say much in favour of Rowallan's poetical powers, and even wills to place this western baronet's abilities, as a candidate in the Parnassian scale, almost next in degree with those of that much talked about, though little read or understood brother of the lyre, Sir William Drummond of Hawthornden, who also was his contemporary. These gentlemen having been born within nine years, and died within eight years of each other, the former in the sixty-third, and the latter in the sixty-fourth year, of their respective ages.

The Third Section, amongst other varieties, contains a small portion of the Song and Ballad lore, that erst was floating about on the wings of tradition, over the shires of Renfrew and Ayr, during the era of the Editor's boyhood; and which, some time ago, at passing intervals, were noted

down by him, partly from early recollections, and partly from the singing of one or two individuals, whose memories in these matters, had been greener than his own. These reminiscences were generally committed by him to paper, at the time, or soon afterwards, as nearly as the sets picked up during his juvenile researches, warranted him to do; and each traditional specimen will now be found placed in its respective class, along with some illustrative notice or other, wherever the same has been deemed necessary. These pieces, as various in merit, as in plot or incident, are here given as they were found by him, so far as well could be done, without unnecessarily trespassing beyond the pale of decency and decorum; which restricting caveat, he is sorry to acknowledge, has, in not a few instances, caused him throw aside a number of superior pieces, which, but for their freedom, might otherwise have been admitted here, or any where else, as tolerably fair specimens of lyrical composition in their own way; but wherever, for the sake of introducing one or more of these, he has altered, as seemed to him for the better, any relic of the olden times, the correction, whatever it may be, is acknowledged in its subjoined note—while the traditional fragments gleaned by him, which now must be considered as nearly if not altogether his own, when a whole could not be procured, have been eked out a stanza or two, or remodelled according to circumstances for the sake of unity, and then embodied into a song, with the intent of