

“PEGGY ON THE BANKS O’ SPEY”

A. Recorded from Mrs. Elsie Morrison, Nether Dallachy, Spey Bay, April 1956

B. Recorded from Jeannie Robertson (Mrs. Jean Higgins), Aberdeen, August 1953

A

Peggy on the banks o’ Spey
She’s aye sae blythe an’ cheerie O,
An’ a country chiel she likes sae weel
Tae rowe her in his plaidie O.

Bye an’ bye some night I’ll try
Tae wile her fae her daddie O,
An’ I’ll kiss her ower and ower again
An’ rowe her in my plaidie O.

The plooman lads are rovin’ lads—
Ye aye ken fit they’re seekin’ O.
They pawn their kist, an’ syne they ’list
An’ they leave their lassies greetin’ O.

He’s pitten me fae jumpin’ dykes,
Fae dancin’ and fae fiddlin’ O.
He’s gien me laces tae my stays—
They’re o’ the latest fashion O.

Gin I had back fit I ainst had
(But that’s fit I will never O)
I’d tak guid care, an’ be aware
O’ the young men in the gloamin’ O.

Allegro Modto

The musical score is written on five staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo marking 'Allegro Modto' is placed above the first staff. The lyrics are written below the notes on each staff. The lyrics are: 'Peg-gy on the banks o' Spey, she's aye sae blythe and cheer-ic-O, and a count-ry chiel she likes sae weel Tae rowe her in his plaid-ic-O Bye and bye some night I'll try to wile her fae her dad-die-O, and I'll kiss her ower an' ower a-gain and rowe her in my plaid - ic - O'.

B

When I was new but sweet sixteen
 In beauty jist in bloomin' O
 O little little did I think
 At nineteen I'd be greetin' O.

For the plooman lads, they're gey weel lads,
 They're false and deceivin' O.
 They sail awa and they gang awa
 And they leave their lassies greetin' O.

For if I had 'a kent what I dae ken
 And teen my mither's biddin' O
 For I widnae be sittin' at your fireside,
 Cryin' hishy-ba my bairnie O

O hishy-ba, O I'm your ma
 But the Lord knows wha's your daddie O—
 But I'll tak good care, and I'll be aware
 Of the young men in the gloamin' O.

Allegro Modto

When I was new but sweet sixteen in beaut-y jist in bloomin' O, Oh
 lit-tle lit-tle did I think at nine-teen I'd be greet-in'-O, for the
 ploo- men lads they're gey weel lads, they're false and de- ceiv-in'-O. They
 sail a-wa', and they gang a-wa' and they leave their lass-ies greet-in'-O.

'This folk-song seems to be a native of Strathspey. Mrs. Elsie Morrison heard it in the Ballindalloch area over fifty years ago. Many singers in Upper Banffshire know snatches of it; in addition to the versions printed above, I have a fragment from Willie Gordon, Lilybank, Tomintoul, and a fine gallus recording from Alec Gately, Morinsh—this last the pride of a night-long ceilidh in the Pole Inn, Glenlivet, in March 1956. Alec's title is "Mary on the Banks o' Spey"; his text closely resembles Mrs. Morrison's.

Jeannie Robertson comes of tinkler-gypsy stock, and her people are well known on Speyside. It seems likely that the song will have

been picked up by the travelling folk from the farm servants of the area.

Willie Gordon's first verse is the one usually heard:

Peggy on the banks o' Spey
She's aye sae blythe and cheerie O:
She looks sae shy when I pass by
She would hardly be my dearie O.

HAMISH HENDERSON.

Music transcribed by Francis Collinson.

Note on "The Gairdener and the Plooman"

(Song on page 182)

This song was collected from Mrs Elsie Morrison, Nether Dallachy, Spey Bay, on 5th April 1956. Mrs Morrison, a native of Ballindalloch, learned many of her songs when she was fee'd on Speyside farms in her young days. "I used tae be in the fairm-kitchens, cook, and ye ken what it is in the fairms, at nicht they wad play the melodcon in the kitchen and sing sangs, and then they had tae clear oot at nine o'clock—but ye ken whit the fairms is, the bothy lads wad be singin' a' that kin' o' sangs, ye see, an' me bein' a young quine, I just pickit them up."

Two versions of this song were printed by Gavin Greig in his *Folksongs of the North-East* (reprints of articles which appeared between December 1907 and June 1911 in the *Buchan Observer*). The first is in Article CXXVI; John Ord subsequently reprinted it, with a few minor alterations, in his *Bothy Songs and Ballads* (p. 94). Greig's second version (*Folksongs of the North-East*, Article CXXVIII) is closer to ours.

The song appears to be a distant descendant of a classical ballad "The Gardener" (Child, 219). As Professor Child himself indicates (Vol. V, pp. 258-9), a version of this ballad printed by Wm. Forrest in the Cowgate, Edinburgh, in 1766 shares stanzas with two other songs, "The Seeds of Love" and "A Sprig of Thyme". The farm servants of the North-East have inherited these, severally and as a sort of compost. From the latter has sprung a new song, bringing in a "plooman lad" to comfort the gardener's forsaken sweetheart.

HAMISH HENDERSON.