Scottish Studies 42/2 (2026): 56–67

‘Up in the Air’ or ‘The Grey Mare’: A Scottish and English Prosimetrical Form of ATU 1540 ‘The Student from Paradise (Paris)’

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This prosimetrical piece was performed for Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) by a friend and was published by Scott in 1830. As he explains, it was included in the repertoire of light-hearted informal entertainments that Scottish lawyers engaged in during the eighteenth century. An English parallel published in 1824 shows that the lawyers were performing a component of the widely known international tale type ATU 1540 ‘The Student from Paradise (Paris)’. The song beginning ‘Good morrow shepherd & my friend’ in the eighteenth-century Edinburgh manuscript of Elizabeth St Clair is also identifiable as belonging to this tale type.

So far as is known, the lawyers’ tradition of entertaining themselves with performances like this did not survive after the eighteenth century, but it is worth observing that a prosimetrical form – the *chantefable*, with a set song repeated during the course of the prose narrative – continued more recently. Sheila Stewart in her book *A Traveller’s Life* describes how she first hears ‘Aippley and Orangey’ (the Scottish title of ATU 720 ‘The Juniper Tree’) told by her granny round a campfire in Aberfeldy when she was a little girl.[1] It remained a favourite story which she told frequently herself, and the verse given here (*Fig. 1*) was included in a performance she recorded on video in 1983:[2]

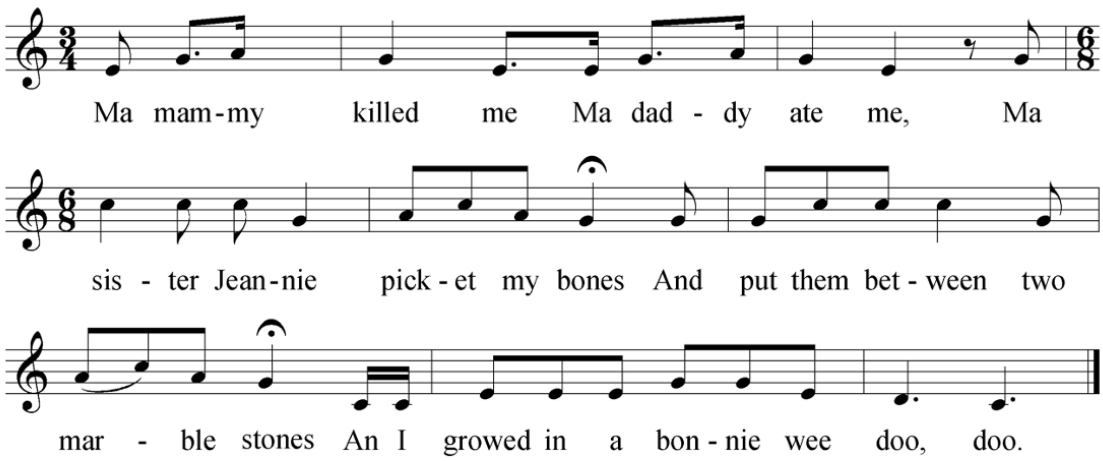


Figure 1 ‘Aippley and Orangey’, transcribed from the singing of Sheila Stewart.

Another once familiar Scottish nursery story, ‘The Well at the World’s End’ (ATU 440 ‘The Frog King or Iron Henry’) has not been found in tradition recently, and it was thought that the tune of the song had been lost. Luckily, however, the tune known to Scott’s friend, Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe (1781–1851) has been preserved in manuscript. The verbal text of Sharpe’s version, which was told to him by his nurse,

[1] Sheila Stewart, *A Traveller’s Life* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2011), 12–16.
[2] ‘Aippley and Orangey’, Sheila Stewart (contributor); Sheila Douglas (fieldworker); ref. VD011, School of Scottish Studies Archives, University of Edinburgh.

Jenny Blackadder, was published by Robert Chambers in 1842.[3] The tune and accompanying words given here (*Fig. 2*) are from the manuscript derived from Sharpe, where the title is ‘The Paddo’:[4]

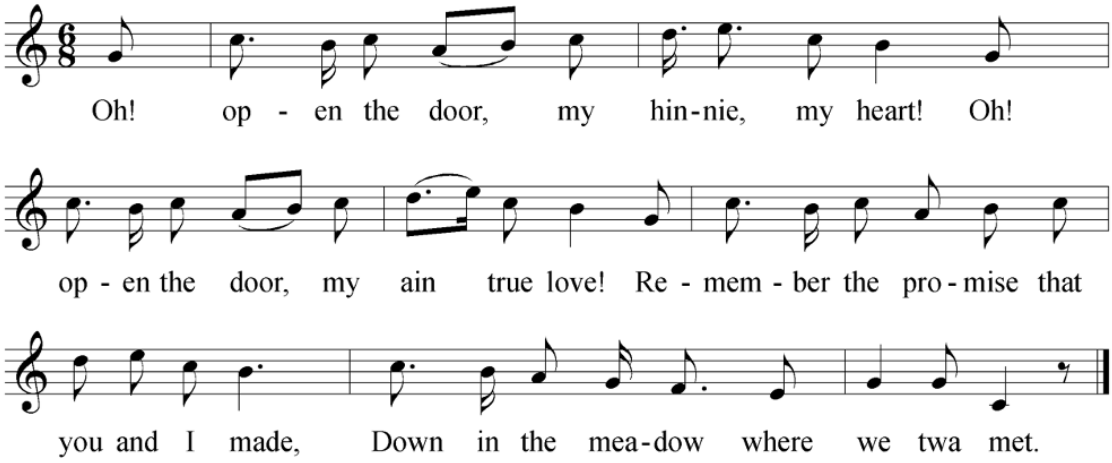


Figure 2 ‘The Paddo’ from NLS MS 843, f. 31.

Scott knew both of these *chantefables* and referred to them as ‘nursery stories of my childhood’;[5] but in the case of the lawyers’ entertainments, he was dependent on the reminiscences of his older friends. He speaks of these performances as ‘High Jinks’, and he gives two instances.

The first, ‘Gerunto’, was evidently quite widely known. Scott turned a performance of it into fiction in his novel *Guy Mannering*,[6] published in 1815, and he added the following note on it in the *Magnum Opus* edition in 1828.[7] He made particular use of information derived from Alexander Keith of Ravelston (1737–1819), who was still living when *Guy Mannering* appeared, but had died before Scott’s *Magnum Opus* was published:

> I believe this strange species of game or revel to be the same mentioned in old English plays,[8] and which was called ‘Coming from Tripoli’. When the supposed King was seated on his post of elevation, the most active fellow in the party came into the presence,

[3] Robert Chambers, *Popular Rhymes* (Edinburgh: W. and R. Chambers, 1842), 52–53.

[4] National Library of Scotland MS 843, f. 31. The manuscript was prepared in 1847 by Thomas Legerwood Hately, who commented on f. 30: ‘Mr Sharpe's nurse used to sing this tune to the fairy-tale of the “Well at the World’s End.” – It was noted down by Mr Sharpe for the purpose of accompanying the tale on the same subject which he intended to write for Lady John Scott’. ‘The Well at the World’s End’ is another name for ‘The Paddo’.

[5] H. J. C. Grierson, ed., *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, 12 vols. (London: Constable and Co., 1932–7), vol 6: 311, Letter to Edgar Taylor, 16 January 1823. Taylor’s translation of the Grimms’ fairy tales, *German Popular Stories*, was published in 1823; see further, John Shaw, ‘The Grimms, Scotland and “This new science of ‘storyology’”’, in *Grimm Ripples: The Legacy of the Grimms’* Deutsche Sagen *in Northern Europe*, ed. Terry Gunnell (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 288–315, esp. 293.

[6] P. D. Garside, ed., *Guy Mannering* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 204, 553.

[7] J. H. Alexander with P. D. Garside and Claire Lamont, *Walter Scott. Introductions and Notes from The Magnum Opus: Waverley to Legend of the Wars of Montrose*, Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels 25 [A] (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 123.

[8] There are references in Ben Jonson, *Epicoene or The Silent Woman*, Act 5, scene 1, lines 38–40 (ed. L. A. Beaurline. London: Edward Arnold, 1978, 123) and John Fletcher, *Monsieur Thomas or Father’s Own Son*, Act 4, scene 2, lines 64–9 (ed. Nanette Cheri Clinch. New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987, 92–3, 291 n. 69) and these may indicate a game involving leaping over stools, but there is no text or account of a performance.

> leaping over as many chairs and stools as he could manage to spring over. He is announced as
>
> A post –
>
> King. From whence?
>
> Post. From Tripoli, my liege.
>
> He then announces to the mock monarch the destruction of his army and fleet. This species of High Jinks was called 'Gerunto,' from the name of the luckless general. I have seen many who have played at it. Among the rest, an excellent friend and relation, now no more (the late Mr Keith of Dunnottar and Ravelston), gave me a ludicrous account of a country gentleman coming up to Edinburgh rather unexpectedly, and finding his son, who he had hoped was diligently studying the law in silence and seclusion, basely engaged in personating the King in a full drama of 'Gerunto'. The monarch, somewhat surprised at first, paid it off with assurance, calling for a seat to his honoured father, and refusing to accost him otherwise than in the slang of the character. This incident – in itself the more comic situation of the two – suggested the scene in the text.

In his novel, Scott quotes a little more of the play:

> Where is Gerunto now? And what's become of him?
>
> Gerunto's dead because he could not swim, &c. &c.[9]

The other instance of High Jinks mentioned by Scott is 'Up in the Air'. When Scott published it in his essay on 'Popular Poetry' prefaced to the 1830 edition of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*,[10] he alluded to the adaptation published by Allan Ramsay in *The Tea-Table Miscellany*[11] which is given on the next page (*Fig. 3*) with the music published by Alexander Stuart.[12] The Ramsay text includes an indication of a repeat of the last lines (beginning 'Up in the Air' in verse 1). This is indicated in the music with a repeat sign, though this is not present in the Stuart original.

[9] Garside 1999, 204. See also item no. 24, described as 'a pub game', in David Hewitt, ed., *Poetry from the Waverley Novels and Other Works* (Edinburgh University Press, 2024), 18, 338–9.
[10] Walter Scott, 'Introductory Remarks on Popular Poetry and on the Various Collections of Ballads of Britain, particularly Those of Scotland', in *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh and London: Cadell and Company and Simpkin and Marshall, 1830), vol. 1: 1–83.
[11] Allan Ramsay, *The Tea-Table Miscellany* (Edinburgh: Thomas Ruddiman, 1723), 147–149; also Murray Pittock and Brianna E. Robertson Kirkland, eds, *The Edinburgh Edition of The Collected Works of Allan Ramsay*, Volume IV, *The Tea-Table Miscellany* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023), R75, pp. 98–99, 602. See also Rhona Brown, ed. *The Edinburgh Edition of The Collected Works of Allan Ramsay*. *Poems.* 2 vols. Volume II *Poems: 1721 & 1728* and Volume III *Poems: uncollected & dubia* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023), vol. 1: 513.
[12] Alexander Stuart, *Musick for Allan Ramsay's collection of Scots songs set by Alexr. Stuart and engrav'd by R. Cooper*. Edinburgh: Allan Ramsay, 1724–5.



Figure 3 ‘Up in the Air’, text from Ramsay (1723: 147–9); tune from Stuart (1724–5: 146–7).

2 The Wind’s drifting Hail and Sna’
O’er frozen Hags like a Foot Ba’,
Nae Starns keek throw the Azure Slit,
’Tis cauld and mirk as ony Pit,
The man i’ the Moon
Is carowsing aboon,
D’ye see, d’ye see, d’ye see him yet.
The Man, &c.

3 Take your Glass to clear your Een,
’Tis the Elixir heals the Spleen,
Baith Wit and Mirth it will inspire,
And gently puffs the Lover’s Fire,
Up in the Air,
It drives away Care,
Ha’e wi’ ye, ha’e wi’ ye, and ha’e wi’ ye Lads yet,
Up in, &c.

4 Steek the Doors, keep out the Frost,
Come, Willie, gi’es about ye’r Tost,
Til’t Lads, and lilt it out,
And let us hae a blythsome Bout.
Up wi’t there, there,
Dinna cheat, but drink fair,
Huzza, Huzza, and Huzza Lads yet,
Up wi’t, &c.

Scott made the link between this song and the prosimetrical performance when he treated the material in a long note to his essay:[13]

[13] Sigrid Rieuwerts and Emily Lyle, eds, *The Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott’s Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming), 2: 421–2.

> Another song [besides 'Bessie Bell and Mary Gray'], of which Ramsay chose a few words for the theme of a rifacimento, seems to have been a curious specimen of minstrel recitation. It was partly verse, partly narrative, and was alternately sung and repeated. The story was the escape of a young gentleman, pursued by a cruel uncle, desirous of his estate; or a bloody rival, greedy of his life; or the relentless father of his lady-love, or some such remorseless character, having sinister intentions on the person of the fugitive. The object of his rapacity or vengeance being nearly overtaken, a shepherd undertakes to mislead the pursuer, who comes in sight just as the object of his pursuit disappears, and greets the shepherd thus:–
>
> PURSUER.
>
> Good morrow, shepherd, and my friend;
> Saw you a young man this way riding,
> With long black hair, on a bob-tail'd mare,
> And I know that I cannot be far behind him?
>
> THE SHEPHERD.
>
> Yes, I did see him this way riding,
> And what did much surprise my wit,
> The man and the mare flew up in the air,
> And I see, and I see, and I see her yet.
> Behind yon white cloud I see her tail wave,
> And I see, and I see, and I see her yet.
>
> The tune of these verses is an extremely good one, and Allan Ramsay has adapted a bacchanalian song to it with some success; but we should have thanked him much had he taken the trouble to preserve the original legend of the old minstrel. The valued and venerable friend to whom we owe this mutilated account of it, has often heard it sung among the High Jinks of Scottish lawyers of the last generation.

Scott's son-in-law, John Gibson Lockhart, identified the 'valued and venerable friend' who gave Scott the 'mutilated account' as 'The Right Honourable William Adam, Lord Chief Commissioner of the Scotch Jury Court'.[14] Scott had become friendly with Adam and wrote about him very warmly in his *Journal* on 20 January 1826:

> [The Commissioner] is not a very early friend of mine for I scarce knew him till his settlement in Scotland with his present office. But I have since lived much with him and taken kindly to him as one of the most pleasant, kind-hearted, benevolent and pleasing men I have ever known.[15]

William Adam (1751–1839) grew up in Scotland and attended Edinburgh University, but he spent a good part of his life as a parliamentarian in London. He returned to Scotland in 1814 and he and Scott along with William Clerk and Adam Ferguson founded the Blair-Adam Antiquarian Club in 1817. The members of this small club of enthusiasts met about midsummer each year for a weekend at Adam's estate of Blair-Adam near Loch Leven and they went on excursions to places of interest

[14] John Gibson Lockhart, ed. *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.* 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1833), 1: 49.
[15] W. E. K. Anderson, ed., *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1998), 74.

round about. Adam may have performed this item for Scott repeatedly, but one occasion was almost certainly in the summer of 1826 when it was just too hot to go on excursions, as Scott mentions in a letter to Lockhart, written from Parliament House, Edinburgh, on 30 June 1826:

> We have had a course of the most sultry weather I ever remember and the crops I fear will suffer considerably. To stir out in the forenoon is almost sickening and the court where I am writing feels like an overheated oven. Last Saturday I went with Will Clerk and Chief Baron [Sir Samuel Shepherd] to Blair Adam where we lounged about and eat hotch-potch & drank Sauterne as actively as heat would permit.[16]

Adam recalled talking about the lawyers’ entertainments during this relaxed meeting, although he did not specify ‘Up in the Air’. He first mentioned that Scott and Clerk could remember their boyhood years together and that they reminisced about acting plays in the school-room, and he then added that Shepherd and he could recall the ‘Circuit fooleries’, including specially composed songs, that they took part in in England when they began their ‘professional pursuits on the Circuit’ in 1783.[17] It is apparent from this that the ‘fooleries’ were part of the legal tradition in England as well as in Scotland, but Scott does appear to place his version in Scotland by saying that Adam had ‘often heard it sung among the High Jinks of Scottish Lawyers of the last generation’. At any rate, it follows from this statement that it was certainly being performed by Scots.

Scott regretted that Ramsay had not preserved ‘the original legend of the old minstrel’, and the fragmentary account in his note in the *Minstrelsy* is the only known Scottish version to indicate any prose narrative. Fortunately, however, it is possible to give a longer English parallel entitled ‘The Grey Mare, A Derbyshire Tale’ which was published in the review *Saturday Night*.[18] The opening of this version strongly engages the sympathies of the reader or listener for poor Jack, who has been badly treated. Jack, however, is not an innocent victim like those listed as possible protagonists by Scott, but is a trickster who plays on his foster-mother’s gullibility:

> In a remote part of Derbyshire, a wealthy old farmer and his wife, having lived together many years childless, adopted a poor but arch boy, called Jack, and put him to school, with a view of bringing him up to some comfortable trade. In a short time afterwards, the good old man fell sick, and, on his death bed, enjoined his wife to take care of poor Jack, which she faithfully promised to do: But soon after the death of her husband, she forgot both him and her promise; and captivated the miserly old farmer, who used to sit opposite to her at church, to whom she was married, and found means to get rid of poor Jack, who was again thrown on the mercy of the world. He, however, did not remove far, but remained in a situation where he could observe all their proceedings. One day, when the farmer was gone to Ash-down fair, Jack took an opportunity to visit his old dame, who received him with great kindness, and asked him where he had been so long, to which he answered, in heaven, with his good old master; to which he added, his master had sent him for his grey mare, great coat, ten pounds, and a flitch of bacon,

[16] Grierson, *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott,* vol. 10: 67.
[17] William Adam, *Blair-Adam. Being a description of the house and grounds. With plates and plans,* 6 vols. (Blair-Adam: Privately printed, 1834), vol. 1: xxvii–viii.
[18] Anonymous, ‘The Grey Mare, / A Derbyshire Tale’, in *Saturday Night: comprising a review of new publications etc*., 2/49 (1824), 294–5.

which request was immediately granted; and Jack took his leave in high glee. On his road he met with a shepherd, whom he desired to say, if any one enquired for him, that he went over the hill, and fled away in a cloud. The farmer on his return, being made acquainted with the transaction, called his wife an old fool, and went in pursuit of the wag, till he overtook the shepherd, whose tale so perfectly convinced him, that he returned and commended his wife for this kindness to the memory of her late deceased husband. This is the argument of the following ballad:

‘Good morrow Shepherd! welcome friend!
Did not you see a man going this way,
In his own black hair, upon a grey mare,
And I think I’ve describ’d him something near.
Fal, &c.

‘O, yes! O, yes! I did him see:
And he’s just bereav’d me of my wits;
For the man and the mare fled into the air,
And I do think, I do see them yet, yet, O yet’.
Fal, &c.

‘What is the man a going mad,
Or into some wild and frantic fit,’
‘O, wounds!’ said he, ‘I do not lie,
For I think I do see them yet, yet, O yet.
Fal, &c.

O look! O look! Sir! In yonder cloud
Methinks I spy the grey mare’s snout,
See ho! See ho! She gallops amain,
See how she kicks the clouds about!’
Fal, &c.

Then the old man alighted from his horse,
And for to look he did not fail,
‘O wounds!’ said he ‘thou dost not lie;
For now I spy my grey mare’s tail!’
Fal, &c.

Then the old man called out aloud,
As if he had been calling to a friend,
‘Hollo! hollo! hollo! Jack, hollo!
To my wife’s first husband me commend!’
Fal, &c.

Then the old man mounted up again,
And home again he rode with speed;
And his wife Joan he did much commend
For doing her husband so good a deed.
Fal, &c.

The first trick, in which Jack claims that he has been sent from heaven to earth to bring back goods to heaven, is not present in Scott’s account which focuses on the second trick in which the shepherd claims (on Jack’s suggestion) that he has seen Jack ride up into the sky and that he is still visible. The motivation for the second trick stems from the earlier one in the Derbyshire account and convinces the farmer that Jack had really come from heaven as he claimed and is returning there. There is no trace of this in Scott’s account which is a secular story that could be told of various pursuit situations, but the St Clair song quoted below contains the reference to heaven where the wife’s first husband dwells.

The English narrative is clearly identifiable as a version of ATU 1540 ‘The Student from Paradise (Paris)’ which has not been known to scholarship hitherto. The type description runs:[19]

> A (beggar, traveler, clergyman) tells a (foolish) woman that he comes from Paris. She understands this to be Paradise. (Or, he sings, ‘I come from heaven’, or says he comes from the beyond or is a messenger from hell).The wife tells him that her husband (son) died shortly before. The student claims to have met him in paradise (hell) and tells her that her husband needs certain things. The wife gives the student money (clothes, food, horse, etc.) to take to her husband.
>
> The oldest son (brother-in-law, husband) goes after the trickster to retrieve the money. The trickster steals his horse (the son runs his own horse to death).

ATU gives no instance from Scotland and notes only one version from England.[20] This is ‘Jack Hannaford’ which was collected in Devonshire by the Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould and published in his collection of ‘Household Tales’ included as an Appendix in William Henderson’s *Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties and the Borders* in 1866. In the episode of the pursuit, the farmer rides after Jack Hannaford, an old soldier reduced to poverty who has been given ten pounds in gold by the farmer’s wife:

> There was no time to waste words; so the farmer mounted his horse and rode off after Jack Hannaford. The old soldier heard the horse’s hoofs clattering on the road behind him, so he knew it must be the farmer pursuing him. He lay down on the ground, and shading his eyes with one hand, looked up into the sky, and pointed heavenwards with the other hand.
>
> ‘What are you about there?’ asked the farmer, pulling up.
>
> ‘Lord save you!’ exclaimed Jack, ‘I’ve seen a rare sight!’
>
> ‘What was that?’
>
> ‘A man going straight up into the sky, as if he were walking on a road’.
>
> ‘Can you see him still?’

[19] Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales*. 3 vols. Folklore Fellows Communications 284–6. (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2004), vol. 2: 277–8.

[20] Katherine M. Briggs, *A Dictionary of British Folk Tales*. 4 vols. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970–1); Ernest W. Baughman, *Type and Motif Index of the Folktales of England and North America*, Indiana University Folklore Series, no. 20 (The Hague: Mouton, 1966). Under ‘England’, ATU notes Briggs 1970, A II, 131–3 and Baughman 1966, Type 1540, and both have only a reference to ‘Jack Hannaford’ as it was given by Joseph Jacobs, *English Fairy Tales* (London: David Nutt, 1890), 40–43, 232. Jacobs identifies his source as Baring-Gould in William Henderson, *Notes on the Folk Lore of the Northern Counties of England and the Borders with an appendix on household stories by S. Baring-Gould, M.A.* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1866), 299–344. Henderson is the source of the story quoted here.

'Yes, I can'.
'Where?'
'Get off your horse and lie down'.
'If you will hold the horse'.
Jack did so readily.
'I cannot see him,' said the farmer.
'Shade your eyes with your hand, and you'll soon see a man flying away from you'.
Sure enough he did so, for Jack leaped on the horse, and rode away with it. The farmer walked home without his horse.
'You are a bigger fool than I am,' said his wife, 'for I only did one foolish thing, and you have done two'.[21]

Both 'Jack Hannaford' and the 'Up in the Air' narrative speak of a report that the pursued man on horseback has gone up into the sky,[22] but 'Up in the Air' introduces the extra character of the shepherd who willingly enters into Jack's quick-witted ploy. In 'Jack Hannaford', as in one of the directions taken by the tale-type outline, the trickster steals the farmer's horse. In this form of the story, the farmer recognizes that he has been fooled, by contrast with the 'grey mare' form, where the farmer becomes convinced that his wife's previous husband has been in touch from heaven. The partial narrative supplied by Scott lacks the ending, but probably the farmer is finally persuaded that he sees the grey mare, as he does in the other Scottish version, the song text from Elizabeth St Clair given below.[23]

1. Good morrow shepherd & my friend
   Saw ye a young man this way riding
   With long black hair & a Bob'd tail'd mare
   And Im sure I cannot be far behind him

2. O yes I saw him this way rideing
   And what much surprised my wit
   The man & the mare flew up in the Air
   And I see him yet & I see him yet

3. O certainly ye are mistaken
   Or are in some frantic fitt
   Sirrah says the shepherd say not so to me
   For I see him yet & I see him yet

4. At first I thought you was mistaken
   But now I plainly do percieve

[21] Henderson, *Notes on the Folk Lore of the Northern Counties,* 319–20; quotation from 320.
[22] Although there is no mention of a tree, this episode is similar to the motif in Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature. A classification of narrative elements in folk-tales, ballads, etc*. 6 vols. (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1955–58), vol. 4: 276: 'K 341.9. Thief tells his pursuer that the thief has gone to heaven by way of a tree. While the man lies on the ground and looks up, the thief steals his horse'.
[23] The text is given here from pages 159–60 of the Mansfield MS in Broughton House, Kirkcudbright, by kind permission of the National Trust for Scotland. For context, see Ronnie Clark, compiler, *Mansfield Manuscript: an old Edinburgh collection of songs and ballads* (Glasgow: The Glasgow Ballad Workshop, 2015).

Behind yon little cloud see my Grey Mares tail
And I see it wave & I see it wave

5. Then fare ye well my son John
I wish ye well to your journeys end
See ho, see ho, see my son john
To my wifes first husband me commend.

The tale has an unusual form since, as can be seen in the full ‘grey mare’ version, it is told only in prose up to the point where the dialogue begins but continues the narrative within the verse passage after the dialogue is over. Possibly there was once an entire treatment in verse, of which the opening has survived only in prose, but the extant witnesses show that the story did have currency in this hybrid form in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in both Scotland and England.

For Scotland we have its intriguing context as an element in the lawyers’ ‘fooleries’ and the St Clair song text, and we also have the tune given with the Ramsay adaptation. When the tune is set to a stanza in the St Clair MS the result runs as shown here (*Fig. 4*), with the music necessitating a repeat of the last two lines of the text beginning ‘The man & the mare’:

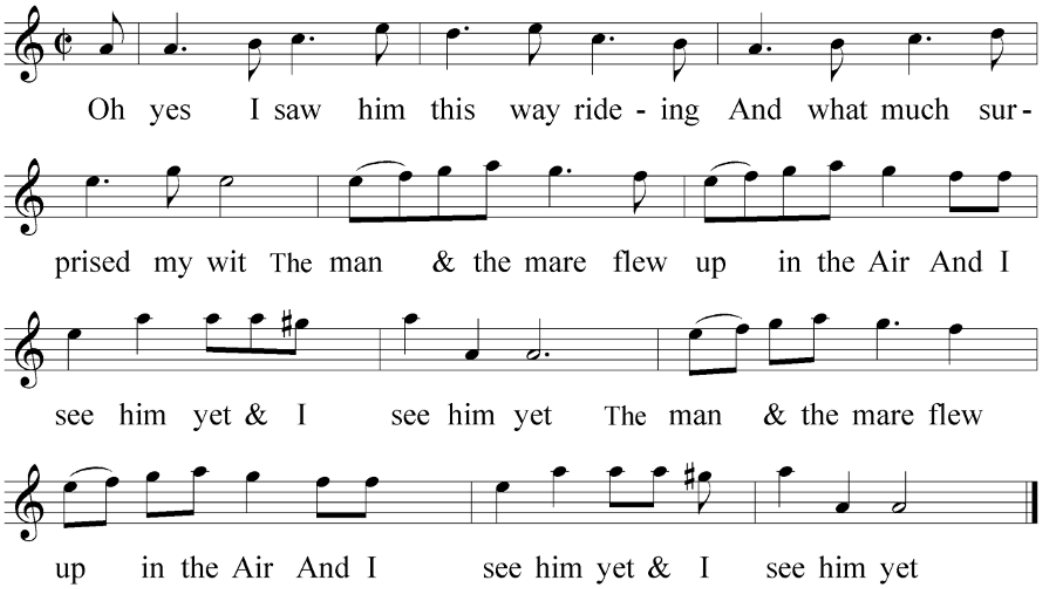


Figure 4 ‘Up in the Air’ verse 2: text and repeat from Elizabeth St Clair, Mansfield MS, p. 159; tune from Stuart (1724–5: 146–7).

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Digital Source

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