

## SONGS OF LABOUR.

**I**N the Hebrides labour and song went hand in hand; labour gave rise to song, and song lightened labour. In this book specimens are given of songs associated with spinning, waulking, milking, churning, and rowing. Apart altogether from their musical value, they are of interest as a characteristic element in a life which is fast passing away. Labour is now being more and more divorced from song, and in the course of a very few years the folk will be surprised to hear that their fathers and mothers once used song as a substitute for steam and electricity! One reason is that labour itself is changing; in its old forms it was suited to song; in its new forms the noise of machinery is its music. The quern, for instance, is never used now except in a case of emergency in the outlying isles, and with the quern has disappeared some of the prettiest Gaelic croons. Likewise, patent churns impoverish equally the lirts and the buttermilk, and once sanitary law has forbidden hand-milking and home-waulking (or, at any rate, "human" waulking!) the last link between song and labour will have been snapped.

It is hardly necessary to say that the measure and the time of the labour-songs are suited to the special kind of work involved. In the spinning-song, for instance, "the long drawn out gradually accelerating phrase culminating in a long pause, is evoked by the periodic rhythm of the spinning itself." The wool is carded into rolls or "rowans" (Gaelic *rolag*), and the time of the song is really determined by the spinner's manipulation of the rolls. As a rule, the spinner is singing the verse and the short chorus as she stretches out her hand for another roll, joins it to the end of the spun one, and gets into the swing of the spinning; this done, the wheel and the long chorus go merrily together, gradually getting quicker, till the spinner, prolonging a note, stretches out as far as her right hand can reach what remains of the roll, and then, with a *hithallean beag cha la o hill iù ra bhò*, runs it through to the bobbin.

Of the labour-songs which survive, the ones used for waulking, for fulling the home-spun cloth, are the most numerous and the most varied. The theme may be love or war or the praise of a chief, or even a tragedy such as the *Sea-Sorrow*; any song, indeed, may be used for waulking, provided the verse is sufficiently short and the chorus sufficiently long. Many of the old Ossianic ballads have been adapted for the purpose, each line forming a verse, followed by a chorus; the result being that ballads which might otherwise have been lost have been thus preserved, though in every case the diction has been greatly simplified and modernised in the process. There are, of course, different songs for different stages of the waulking,\* and the stages vary from two or three at a "little" waulking to anything up to twelve at a "big" waulking. The writer has noted the following well-defined stages at Hebridean waulkings within the last twenty years:— (1) Fairly slow songs—*drain-teasachuidh*, "heating-songs"—to give the woman time to get into the swing of the work. (2) Lively songs—*drain-teannachaidh*, "tightening-songs"—to break the back of the work. (3) Frolic-songs—*drain-shiùgraidh*—to give the maidens a chance of avowing or disavowing their sweethearts. (4 and 5) Stretching and clapping songs—*a' simeadh 's a' haslachadh an aodaich*—to make certain that the cloth is of even breadth. (6) The consecration of the cloth—*coisrigeachd an aodaich*. (7) Folding songs—*a' coinnleachadh an aodaich*. As the consecration of the cloth is now practically a thing of the past, a specimen† of the chants used may be given—

Car deiseal a h-aon,  
Car deiseal a dhà,  
Car deiseal a trì.

A' ghrian gus a' chuan shiar,  
An cinneadh-dlaonda gus an Trianaid  
Annas gach gnìomh gu suthainn siorraidh,  
'S annas na sòlasaibh.

Beannachd an Dòmhnaich air an aodach so,  
Gu meal 's gu' u caith na fiurain c  
Air muir 's air tìr, 's ann an caochladh  
Nam mòr-thonna.

Oran a h-aon air,  
Oran a dhà,  
Oran a trì,

'S nar biodh fuaighteach ris gu dìlinn  
Ach ceol-gàire nan nionag  
'S pògan-mèala nam mìteag  
'S nan òranaich'—  
Is fòghnaidh sin!

The sunwise turn once,  
The sunwise turn twice,  
The sunwise turn thrice. } *Suiting the action  
to the words.*

The sun to the Western Sea,  
Mankind to the Holy Three  
In each deed for aye and aye,  
And in the gladnesses.

The blessing of the Lord on this cloth,  
May the heroes wear it, enjoy it,  
By sea, by land, in the changes  
Of mighty waves.

One song on it,  
Two songs,  
Three songs,  
And may there be sewed to it never  
But music-laughter of maidens,  
Honey-kisses of fair ones  
And singing ones—  
And that sufficeth!

It may be added that, in the case of the frolic-songs, verses were improvised in which the name of each maiden present was coupled with that of her sweetheart, to whom some slighting allusion‡ was invariably made; and the maiden, in her reply, was expected to resent this and to praise the slighted one up to the skies. Sometimes, however, either from want of will or want of pluck in the maiden (in the Hebrides it could hardly have been lack of poetic talent!) the young man was left unpraised and unsung, the result being civil war in the township, and breaking of hearts, if not of heads.

KENNETH MACLEOD.

\* It may be explained that the object of the waulking is to shrink and thicken the cloth. The web is steeped in ammonia and laid on a long narrow table, at which some twelve or twenty women sit down and thump and rub the cloth against the boards, always taking care to keep it moving sunwise round the table. Cloth for Sunday wear gets about two hours' waulking; cloth for the wear and tear of tilling and haring has to be thicker, and gets at least double the time. No one ever asks, however, "How long will it take?" but "How many songs will it take?"

† From Janet Macleod.

‡ The Gaelic expressions are: *cur nan gillean 'san dùbhradh* (or, *lùradh*); *'gan toirt as*; *'gan fàgast ann*.

# MILKING CROON.

Cronan Bleoghain.

Air, Refrain, and one Verse noted from the singing of Peggy Macdonald, S. Uist.

Extra verses from "Carmina Gadelica" with kind permission of M<sup>rs</sup> E. Carmichael Watson.

arranged for voice and pianoforte by MARJORY KENNEDY-FRASER.

*Tenderly enticing but strictly rhythmical.*

VOICE. *Or in B flat.* Where the  
*Pronounce* { Il a  
 Eel - a -

PIANO. *Or cantabile. p e dolce. p e dolce.*

† Kye by the brooklet wan-der, Down by the..... brook-let wan-der, By  
 bho-lag-ain il bho-m'aigh-ean Il a bho-lag-ain il..... bho-m'aigh-ean Il a  
 - vo - la - kin eel vo \*"my"- an Eel-a - vo - la - kin eel..... vo my - an • Eel - a -

bog-land or brooklet wan-der, My own cat-tle, our saints be guard-ing.  
 bho-lag-ain il bho-m'aigh-ean Mo chrodh laoigh air gach taobh an abh-ainn.  
 - vo - la - kin eel..... vo my - an Mó - chró \*laoee air gach taov an a - vin.

*leggiere e mp*

*espress.*

*ten.*

Additional verses from the "Carmina Gadelica."

\* Pronounce like English "my?"

\* ao - like eu in French *peur*.

† Kye - cattle (pronounce the vowels ye like y in "by")

Silk-en te-ther for my own hei-fer, Rope of straw for the town-land cat-tle, Herdsman  
*Bua-rach sio-main do chrodh na t'ei-le Bua-rach sio-da do m'aigh-eanfhein O bua-rach*  
*Bo..... lur-ach, bo nah-air-idh Bo a' bha-theach math-air laogh Buachaille*

*p*

Pa-trick and milk-maid \*Bri-de Sain and save you and shield... you.... ev-er.  
*su-gain air crodh na duth-cha Bua-rach ur air mo bhuail-eig..... gaoil-sa.*  
*Pa-druig is ban-chaig Bri-de D'ar sion d'ar dion..... 's d'ar comh-nadh.*

*senza respirare.*

*espress.*

Where the kye by the brooklet wan-der, Down by the..... brooklet wan-der, Trav-ling  
*Il a bho-lag-ain il bho m'aigh-ean Il a bho-lagain il..... bho m'aigh-ean Il a*

moor-land, trav-ling moss-land, My own cat-tle, our saints be..... guard-ing.  
*bho-lag-ain il..... bho m'aigh-ean Mo crodh-laoigh air gach taobh an..... abh-ainn.*

*rall e dim.*

From rocks, from drifts, from flood-streams, Crooked passes and all dire pit-falls, Ar-rows  
 Bo lur-ach, bo na h-air-idh Bo a' bha-theach math-air laogh Buachaille  
 Bho chreag, bho chath-an, bho allt, Bho..... chadh-a..... cam, bho mhille sluic, Bho.....

straight of the slen-der ban-shee, Heart of en-vy or eye..... of e-vil.  
 Pa-druig is ban-'chaig Bri-de D'ar..... sion d'ar..... dion..... 's d'ar comh-nadh.  
 shaigh-de reang nam ban seanga sith, Bho chridhe mhi ruin, bho..... shuil an uilc.

Where the kye by the brook-let wan-der, Thro' the pass by the brooklet wan-der, By  
 Il a bho-lag-ain il bho m'aighean Il a bho-lag-ain il..... bho m'aigh-ean Il a

bog-land or brook-let wan-der, My dear cat-tle, our saints be..... guard-ing.  
 bho-lag-ain il..... bho m'aigh-ean Mo chrodh-laoigh air gach taobh an..... abh-ainn.

*rall. e dim.*

\* My... trea-sure thou, my lov'd one, Red-eared, notch-eared, high horn-éd, Of the  
*Eud-aíl thu 's thudh'an chrodhmha-ra Chra chluasach bheum chluasach, bheannach cha bhainne*

Sea - kine, thou my trea-sure, Kind-ly kine on each side... of the ri-ver.  
*glas air... bhlas a chaor-ain Ach bhainne meal 'se air cheal na... faoileig.*

Where the kye by the brook-let wan-der, To the shore by the brook-let wan-der, By the  
*Il a bho-lag-ain il bho m'aigh-ean Il a bho-lag-ain il... bho m'aigh-ean Il a*

shore and the brook-let wan-der, My own cat-tle, dear saints be... guard-ing.  
*bho-lag-ain il... bho m'aigh-ean Mo chrodh-laoigh air gach taobh an... abh-ainn.*

Grass and shel-ter for my own hei-fer, Mea-dowgrass, hill, heath, plain, stub-ble, Ev - er  
 'Sgheobh mo chiall-sa..... fiar us fas-ga'Sgeobhi aon-ach, fravch, us machair,'Sgeobh i

smooth be each knoll, each hil - lock, For my kind, fond, heartling heart, my hei - fer.  
 mis - lean,..... ciob us fas-bhuain,'Sgeobhian fion thigo shian nan..... cas-bheann.

Where the kye by the brook-let wan-der, O'er the moor by the brook-let wan-der, Trav'ling  
 Il a bho-lag-ain il bho maigh-ean Il a bho-lag-ain il..... bho maigh-ean Il a

bog-land, trav'ling bent-land, My own cat-tle, dear saints be..... guard-ing.  
 bho-lag-ain il..... bho maigh-ean, Mo chrodh-laoigh air gach taobh an..... abh-ainn.

Milk thou'llt give from the rich sweet club-moss, Hon-ey milk from the rich sweet club-moss, Not as  
*Eud-ail thu's thu crodh na tir-e Bheir thu mar-rum, bheir thu mis dhomh, Bheir thu*

wa - ter... grey from sand-drift, White as sea-gull, thy milk... from club-moss.  
*bain - ne... barr na ciob dhomh, S cha be glais - le... ghlais an... t-siobain.*

*espress.*

Where the kye by the brook-let wan - der, O'er the moss by the brook-let wan - der, By  
*Il a bho - lag-ain il bho m'aigh-ean Il a bho-lag-ain il bho m'aigh-ean Il a*

bog-land and brook-let wan - der, My own cat - tle, dear saints be... guard-ing.  
*bho - lag-ain il... bho m'aigh-ean Mo chrodh-laoigh air gach taobh an... abh - ainn.*

*rall e dim.*

# A CHURNING LILT.

From the singing of Annie Johnstone.  
The Glen, Barra.

Translated and arranged for voice and pianoforte by  
MARJORY KENNEDY-FRASER.

*Lightly and with well marked rhythm.*

PIANO.  
104 =  $\text{♩}$

The piano introduction consists of two staves. The right hand features a series of eighth notes with slurs and accents, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. The tempo is marked as 104 = quarter note.

Am mais-treadh bha aig Moire Air ur-lar a' ghlinne, A'  
Oh Ma-ry had a churning A-down... by the \*Wick, Sweet  
Thig na saor-a, Thig na daor-a, Thig na caon-a, Thig na caomh-a,

The first system includes a vocal line with lyrics in Gaelic and English, and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features chords and eighth notes, with some slurs and accents.

meu-dach-adh an ime, A' laghdach-adh a' bhainne, Thig, a chuinneig,  
milk she would be turning All in-to but-ter thick. Quick, come but-ter  
Thig na gaol-a Thig na claon' A' laghdach-adh a' bhainne,

The second system continues the vocal and piano accompaniment. The piano part includes chords and eighth notes, with some slurs and accents.

thig. Blàthach gu dòrn Sim gu uilinn, Thig, a chuinneig, thig.  
quick. But-ter-milk and sweet but-ter. Quick, come but-ter quick.  
*p* *leggiero.*

The third system concludes the piece. The piano part includes chords and eighth notes, with a dynamic marking of *p* and a tempo marking of *leggiero.*

\*Uig- (Wick) a bay.



*And.*

\*Tha glug an so, Tha glag an so, Tha glag an so, Tha glug an so, Tha  
*Would but-ter but come quick-ly, Full blythe were we I wist, With*  
 Thig an lòn, Thig an smeòl, Thig an ceòl as a' bhruth

rud as fhearr na chòir an so Tha rud as fhearr na fion ann.  
*but-ter to the el-bow, But-ter-milk but to the wrist.*  
 Thig a' chuth-ag, Thig a' cheath-ag Thig an fhos-gag athair.

Thig a chuinneig, thig. Blàthach gu dòrn 'S im gu uilinn, Thig a chuinneig, thig.  
*Heek ach-hoon-yak heek. Blach goo dòrn, Seem goo ool-een Heek ach-hoon-yak heek.*

This verse and the following were added (by kind permission of Dr Alexander Carmichael) from the "Carmina Gadelica"  
 A Churning Lilt.

# SPINNING SONG.

From the singing of Janet Macleod, Eigg,  
memorized by Kenneth Macleod.

Noted and Arr: for voice and pianoforte by  
MARJORY KENNEDY-FRASER.

Moderato. *With daintily marked rhythm.*

PIANO. *Or*  
♩ = 132

*L.H. p e leggero.*

Hù rù rithill iu riu - a - ro hi rithill iu  
\* Who - rue - reel - your - you - are - oh he - reel - you

rithill - o ro - a - ro hi rithill ithill o hiu o ro ro bha ho  
reel oh row - ah - row he - reel - eel - oh - hew - oh - row - rove - ah - ho

*accel.* *lunga pausa.*

*accel.*

*a tempo.* *ten.* *A little slower.*

hithillean beag cha la ò hill iu ra bho. Thug mi gaol duit  
heel - an - peck - ha - la - oh heel - your - ah - vo. Love gave I to

*col canto.* *espressivo.*

*Ped.*

\*The sounds of the syllables of the refrain are here represented by monosyllabic English words.

*a tempo.*

Thug mi gradh duit hithillean beag cha la o hill iu... ra bho  
 thee my lov - er, heel - an - peck ha - la - oh heel - your - ah - vo

*leggiero.*



*a little slower.* *a tempo.*

Nach tug piuth - ar riamh d'a brath - air Hù rù rithill iù  
 Love that sis - ter ne'er gave bro - ther, Who - rue - reel - your -

*molto espress.* *leggiermente.*

*Ped.*



riu... a ro hi rithill iù rithill o ro a ro hi rithill ithill o hill o  
 you - are - oh he - reel - you reel - oh row - are - oh he - reel - eel - oh heel - oh -

*accel.*

*lunga pausa.*

ro ro bhan ho hithillean beag cha la o hill iu... ra bho  
 row - row - van hoe heel - an - peck ha - la - oh heel - your - ah - vo

*a tempo.* *col canto.*

\*This gradually accelerating phrase was sung as the thread was long drawn out.

Nach tug piuth - ar  
Love that sis - ter

*mf* *espressivo.*

riamh d'a brath - air hithillean beag Cha la o hill iù... ra bho  
ne'er gave bro - ther heel an peck. H la o heel your ah vo

*leggiero.*

*ten.*

Nach tug bean d'a cioch - ran ta - laidh Hù rù rithill iù  
To her lull'd one ne'er gave mo - ther Who - rue - reel your -

*mf* *molto espress.* *leggiero.*

riu a ro hi rithill iù rithill o ro... a ro hi rithill ithill o hill o  
you - are - oh he - reel - you reel - oh - row - ah - row hi - reel - eel - oh heel - oh

*accel.*

rò rò bhan hò hithillean beag Cha la o hill iù... ra bho  
row - row - van - hoe Heel - an - peck ha - la - oh heel - your - ah - vo

*col canto.*

Stus' a' chuibh-eal  
Thou the wheel and

*p* *mf* *espressivo.*

s mis' an snaith-lean hithillean beag cha la ho hill iu... ra bho  
I the thread, Ho heel-an-peck ha-la-ho heel-your ah-vo

*leggiero.*

Sinn fo chal-a-nas an Dàin ghil Hù rù rithill iu  
White fate spin-ning o'er our head Ho Who-rue-reel your-

riu a ro hi rithill iu rithill o ro a ro hi rithill ithill o hiu o  
you-are-oh he-reel-you reel-oh row-ah-row he-reel-eel-oh hew-oh-

*accel. e cresc.*

ro ro bhan ho hithillean beag cha la o hill iu... ra bho.  
row row-van ho Heel-an-peck ha-la-oh heel-your-ah-vo.

*p e leggiero.* *p rall.*