

## LEADER HAUGHS AND YARROW.

This is a song which may be safely set down to the end of the seventeenth century, as a broadside copy of it, which from some appearances is of that date, occurs in the Roxburghe Collection in the British Museum. It seems to have been designed to embody a rustic bard's view of the chief places along the valley of the Leader, in Berwickshire, with complimentary references to some of them, particularly to Thirlstain Castle, the seat of the Earls of Lauderdale, which, he says,

— stands as sweet on Leader side  
As Newark does on Yarrow.

There is some fancy in introducing the lapwing, the lark, and the hare, as vehicles for the panegyrics of the poet. Notwithstanding, too, a certain grammatical roughness, most Scotsmen will be sensible of a charm in the flow of the verses, which, in their structure and euphony, and even in some of the local names, as Burnmill, and the constant refrain of Yarrow, have evidently acted as an inspiration and a model to the bard of Rydal Mount, in his exquisite series of poems beginning with *Yarrow Unvisited*. Regarding the authorship, the song itself

leaves us not in doubt, as it introduces him under the name of Minstrel Burne—a curious coincidence with the name of the greatest of our national bards. The Burne of Leader Haughs may be presumed from the term ‘Minstrel,’ and the feeling he expresses for the gentry of the district, to have been one who made his bread by wandering from house to house with a fiddle—

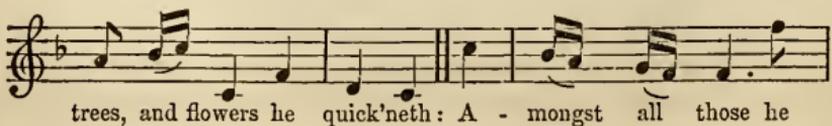
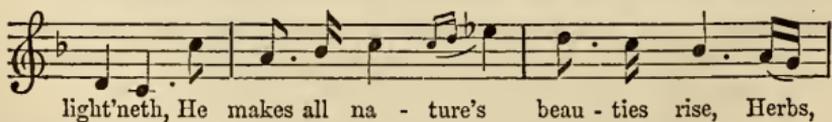
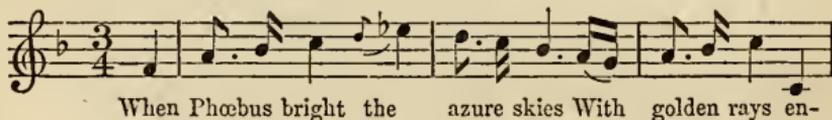
Companion of his lonely way—

wherewith to cheer the firesides at which he was entertained. This, indeed, is made more clear to us by the Roxburghe copy of the song, at the end of which is appended:

‘The words of Burne the Violer,’

followed by three verses not heretofore printed. I was informed by an aged person at Earlstoun in 1826, that there used to be a portrait of Minstrel Burne in Thirlstain Castle, representing him as ‘a douce auld man, leading a cow by a straw-rope.’

Pepys, in his Diary, under July 1666, has the following: ‘To my Lord Lauderdale’s house to speak with him, and find him and his lady, and some Scotch people, at supper. But at supper there played one of their servants upon the violin some Scotch tunes only; several, and the best of their country, as they seem to esteem them, by their praising and admiring them; but, Lord! the strangest ayre that ever I heard in my life, and all of one cast.’ Could this performer be Minstrel Burne?

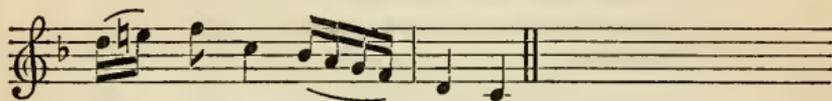




makes his choice, And with de - light goes thor - ow, With



ra - diant beams, the sil - ver streams Of



Lead - er Haughs and Yar - row.

When Phœbus bright the azure skies  
 With golden rays enlight'neth,  
 He makes all nature's beauties rise,  
 Herbs, trees, and flowers he quick'neth :  
 Amongst all those he makes his choice,  
 And with delight goes thorow,  
 With radiant beams, the silver streams  
 Of Leader Haughs and Yarrow.

When Aries the day and night  
 In equal length divideth,  
 And frosty Saturn takes his flight,  
 Nae langer he abideth ;  
 Then Flora queen, with mantle green,  
 Casts aff her former sorrow,  
 And vows to dwell with Ceres' sel,  
 In Leader Haughs and Yarrow.

Pan, playing on his aiten-reed,  
 And shepherds, him attending,  
 Do here resort, their flocks to feed,  
 The hills and haughs commending ;

With cur and kent, upon the bent,  
 Sing to the sun, Good-morrow,  
 And swear nae fields mair pleasures yield,  
 Than Leader Haughs and Yarrow.

A house there stands on Leader-side,  
 Surmounting my describing,  
 With rooms sae rare, and windows fair,<sup>1</sup>  
 Like Daedalus' contriving :  
 Men passing by do aften cry,  
 In sooth it hath no marrow ;  
 It stands as fair on Leader-side  
 As Newark does on Yarrow.

A mile below, who lists to ride,  
 Will hear the mavis singing ;  
 Into St Leonard's banks she bides,  
 Sweet birks her head owerhinging.  
 The lint-white loud, and Progne proud,  
 With tuneful throats and narrow,  
 Into St Leonard's banks they sing,  
 As sweetly as in Yarrow.

The lapwing lilteth ower the lea,  
 With nimble wing she sporteth ;  
 But vows she 'll flee far from the tree  
 Where Philomel resorteth :  
 By break of day the lark can say,  
 I 'll bid you a good-morrow ;  
 I 'll stretch my wing, and, mounting, sing  
 O'er Leader Haughs and Yarrow.

<sup>1</sup> Variation in Roxburghe Collection :

With ease rooms rair and windows fair.

Park, Wanton-wa's, and Wooden-cleuch,  
 The East and Wester Maineses,  
 The wood of Lauder's fair eneuch,  
 The corns are good in the Blainslies :<sup>1</sup>  
 There aits are fine, and sald by kind,  
 That if ye search all thorough  
 Mearns, Buchan, Marr, nane better are  
 Than Leader Haughs and Yarrow.

In Burn-mill-bog and Whitslaid Shaws,  
 The fearful hare she haunteth ;  
 Brig-haugh and Braidwoodshiel she knaws,  
 And Chapel-wood frequenteth :  
 Yet, when she irks, to Kaidslie Birks,  
 She rins, and sighs for sorrow,  
 That she should leave sweet Leader Haughs,  
 And cannot win to Yarrow

What sweeter music wad ye hear,  
 Than hounds and beagles crying ?  
 The started hare rins hard with fear,  
 Upon her speed relying :  
 But yet her strength it fails at length ;  
 Nae bielding can she borrow,  
 In Sorrowless-fields, Clackmae, or Hags ;  
 And sighs to be in Yarrow.

<sup>1</sup> There used to be two sorts of oats in Scotland—the *dour*, or late seed, and the early seed. 'The early were of two sorts : one from *Blainslie*, in Lauderdale, and the other from the *Fans*, in the adjacent district of the Merse. Once in every four or five years, most of the Lothian farmers got a boll or two of them from one or other of these two places, from which they raised on their best lands as much seed as in two or three years at furthest supplied their whole farm.'—Robertson's *Rural Recollections*. 'Three villages called Blainslies, remarkable for their fine oats, which are carried to the most parts of the kingdom, and some of them to the south of London : they are regarded not so much for their whiteness, as for their earliness and increase ; they are commonly sold three or four shillings above the ordinary rate of the market.'—Rev. A. Milne's *Account of Melrose Parish*, 1743.

For Rockwood, Ringwood, Spotty, Shag,  
 With sight and scent pursue her ;  
 Till, ah, her pith begins to flag ;  
 Nae cunning can rescue her :  
 Ower dub and dyke, ower sheuch and syke,  
 She 'll rin the fields all thorough,  
 Till, fail'd, she fa's in Leader Haughs,  
 And bids fareweel to Yarrow.

Sing Erslington<sup>1</sup> and Cowdenknowes,  
 Where Humes had ance commanding ;  
 And Drygrange, with the milk-white yowes,  
 'Twixt Tweed and Leader standing :  
 The bird that flees through Redpath trees  
 And Gladswood banks ilk morrow,  
 May chant and sing sweet Leader Haughs  
 And bonnie howms of Yarrow.

But Minstrel Burne can not assuage  
 His grief, while life endureth,  
 To see the changes of this age,  
 Which fleeting time procureth :  
 For mony a place stands in hard case,  
 Where blithe folk ken'd nae sorrow,  
 With Humes that dwelt on Leader-side,  
 And Scotts that dwelt on Yarrow.

The following are the three additional verses as given in the Roxburghe Collection :

THE WORDS OF BURNE THE VIOLER.

What, shall my viol silent be,  
 Or leave her wonted scriding ?  
 But choise some sadder elegie,  
 Not sports and mirds deriding.

<sup>1</sup> Earlstoun, formerly spelled Ercildoun.

It must be fain with lower strain,  
 Than it was wont before, O,  
 To sound the praise of Leader Haughs  
 And the bonnie banks of Yarrow.

But floods has overflown the banks,  
 The greenish haughs disgracing,  
 And trees in woods grows thin in ranks,  
 About the fields defacing.  
 For waters waxes, woods do waind ;  
 More, if I could for sorrow,  
 In rural verse I could rehearse  
 Of Leader Haughs and Yarrow.

But sighs and sobs o'ersets my breath,  
 Sore saltish tears forth sending,  
 All things sublunar here on earth  
 Are subject to an ending.  
 So must my song, though somewhat long,  
 Yet late at even and morrow  
 I'll sigh and sing sweet Leader Haughs  
 And the bonnie banks of Yarrow.

*Hic terminus haeret.*

It may be remarked that a line in these verses serves to localise the poet as connected with Lauderdale, Thomas the Rhymer of Earlstoun having long before said :

The waters shall wax, and the woods shall wane,  
 But the bannock 'll be ne'er the braider.