GREAT SCOTTISH BALLADS

Sung by

RORY and ALEX McEWEN

Edited by KENNETH S. GOLDSTEIN

MARIE HAMILTON (Child #173)
THE COOPER O' FIFE (Child #277)
CLERK SAUNDERS (Child #69)
BINNORIE (Child #10)
THE DOWIE DENS O' YARROW (Child #214)
BONNIE GEORGE CAMPBELL (Child #210)
THE WIFE OF USHER'S WELL (Child #79)
WILLIE'S FAIR (Child #215)
THE BONNY EARL O' MORAY (Child #181)

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 6927

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Great Scottish Ballads

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ABOUT THE SINGERS

RORY and ALEX McEWEN were born in Berwickshire, Scotland, in 1932 and 1935, respectively, and are part of a large musical family.

Most of the ballads in this album, and many of the songs of Allan Ramsey and Robert Burns, were part of their repertoire long before they became interested in the guitar as an accompanying instrument. Scots folksongs and ballads are most usually sung unaccompanied, but some eight years ago the brothers began trying out Scots songs to guitar accompaniment. This led to their interest in the folksongs, ballads and blues of America and other lands, and their present repertoire is a virtual international songbag.

They served as officers for two years in the Queens Own Cameron Highlanders - Rory in Tripoli and Egypt, and Alex in Germany - both adding substantially to their song knowledge during their service.

They have performed before a large variety of audiences - from night clubs to concert halls, and from Berwick Market in London's Soho to fairgrounds in the country. They have appeared on British Broad casting Corporation programs, and it was in the course of their work on B.B.C. that they met Isla Cameron, Britain's leading female folk singer, and have sung frequently with her ever since.

This album was recorded in New York City where they stopped over for several weeks during a grand tour of the United States.

Edited and notes by KENNETH S. GOLDSTEIN

NOTES BY KENNETH S. GOLDSTEIN

SCOTLAND has had, for many hundreds of years, the richest ballad tradition in the English-speaking world. It is safe to say, with little chance of being contradicted, that given two sets of texts to the same ballads, the Scottish texts will almost always prove to be the superior ones. The test of this thesis lies in reading through Francis James Child's great collection, THE ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH POPULAR BALLADS. More than half of the texts therein printed are from Scottish sources, and the prime texts, in the case of those ballads offering texts from both Scottish and non-Scottish sources, are, in the vast majority of cases, specifically of Scottish origin.

Nor would it be correct to say that such a tradition is dead...or even dying. In 1925, with the publishing of Gavin Grieg's collection of LAST LEAVES OF TRADITIONAL BALLADS AND BALLAD AIRS, scholars were once again shown the vitality and strength of the ballad tradition in Scotland. And in recent years, collectors in Scotland have been having a field day collecting from both new and old generations of ballad singers. Many of the ballads thus collected have come down to us today in a straight, unbroken, oral tradition. Others have been restored to position in the ballad singers' repertoire by means of printed and recorded sources, and are in the process of becoming part of a new and vital oral tradition.

Such are the ballads included in this album. Some are known from a family tradition; others have been learned from literary sources. All, however, form part of this new oral-tradition-in-the-making.

SIDE I, Band 1: THE COOPER O' FIFE (Child #277)

This highly humorous ballad is included by Child under the title The Wife Wrapt in Wether's Skin. Child summarized the story as follows: "Robin has married a wife of two high kin to bake or brew, wash or wring. He strips off a wether's skin and lays it on her back, or prins her in it. He dares not beat her, for her proud kin, but he may beat the wether's skin, and does. This makes an ill wife good."

The version sung here by the McEwens most nearly matches the Child "C" text, originally from Alexander Whitelaw's The Book of Scottish Song (Glasgow, 1844), and may well have come down from this source, though it has been known and sung in the McEwen family for many years.

The ballad is equally well known in the United States, and a great deal of conjecture concerning the refrain burdens used in various sections of the U.S. has been discussed in various articles and books.

The ballad, in all likelihood, is derived from the traditional tale of The Wife Lapped In Morrel's Skin. (See W.C. Hazlitt, Early Popular Poetry, London, 1864-66).

1. There was a wee cooper wha[1] lived in Fife,
   Nickity, nackity, noo, noo, noo,
   And he has gotten a gentle wife,
   Hey Willy Wallicky, hoo John Dougal,
   Alane, quo rushity, roo, roo, roo.

2. She wouldnae[2] bake, she wouldnae brew,
   For spilin'[3] o' her comely hue.

3. She wouldnae card, she wouldnae spin,
   For shamin' o' her gentle kin.

4. She wouldnae wash, she wouldnae wring,
   For spilin' o' her gowden[4] ring.

5. The cooper has gone tae[5] his wool shack
   And put his sheepskin across his wife's back.

6. I willna[6] thrash you for your gentle kin,
   But I will thrash my ain[7] sheepskin.

7. Now all who've gotten a gentle wife
   Just send ye for the wee cooper o' Fife.

(1) who
(2) wouldn't
(3) spoiling, ruining
(4) gold
(5) to
(6) won't
(7) own

For additional information and bibliographical references, see:
Child, Francis J., THE ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH POPULAR BALIAD, 1882-1898, (Reprinted in 1956 by The Folklore Press, 509 Fifth Avenue, N.Y.C.)
Coffin, T.P., THE BRITISH TRADITIONAL BALLAD IN NORTH AMERICA, American Folklore Society, 1950.
Grieg, Gavin, & Kieth, Alexander, LAST LEAVES OF TRADITIONAL BALLADS AND BALLAD AIRS, The Buchan Club, 1925.

SIDE I, Band 2: MARIE HAMILTON (Child #173) sung by Alex McEwen

Child included 28 variants of this ballad in his great collection. Most of these contained the full story of the ballad in which one of the Queen's ladies is pregnant as a result of an affair with the Queen's husband. Upon giving birth to the baby, she disposes of it in one way or another. The baby's crying, however, has been heard by several people in the castle. Her crime is discovered and she is sent by the Queen to be hung or burned. Mary Hamilton then makes her farewell speech.

Two forms of the ballad have come down to us, existing side by side. The first of these is the full ballad as related above. A second form consists merely of a lyric lament which is Mary Hamilton's farewell speech, with no indication of the events which lead up to her punishment.

The events detailed in the ballad appear to be based either on an incident which happened in 1563 in which a French woman servant of Mary, Queen of Scots, had an affair with the Queen's apothecary, or with an incident which took place in the court of Russia's Czar Peter in 1718 involving one Mary Hamilton and the Czar's aide-de-camp. If either of these events is the basis for the ballad tale, then it has obviously suffered great alterations in being handed down through oral tradition. Ballad scholars today are inclined to believe that both stories influenced the Mary Hamilton ballad. Child deduced that the ballad must have been created between 1719 and 1764 and comments: "It is remarkable that one of the very latest of the Scottish popular ballads should be one of the very best."

Alex McEwen sings the shorter "farewell" form in which the ballad details have been omitted. It was learned from the singing of Isla Cameron and is sung to a tune which has been known for many generations in the McEwen family.

1. Yestreen[1] the Queen had four Maries,
   The nicht[2] she'll hae[3] but three;
   There was Marie Seaton, and Marie Beaton,
   And Marie Carmichael and me.

2. O, often hae I dressed my Queen,
   And put gowd[4] in her hair;
   And now I've gotten for my reward
   The gallows to be my share.

3. O, Often hae I dressed my Queen
   And often made her bed,
   And now I've gotten for my reward
   The gallows tree for to tread.

4. I charge ye, all ye mariners,
   When ye sail ower[5] the faem[6],
   Let neither my father nor mither get wit[7]
   But that I'm comin' hame[8].

5. O, little did my mither ken[9]
   When first she cradled me,
   The lands I was to travel in,
   The death I was to dee[10].

6. Yestreen the Queen had four Maries,
   The nicht she'll hae but three;
   There was Marie Seaton, and Marie Beaton,
   Marie Carmichael and me.

(1) yesterday
(2) night
(3) have
(4) gold
(5) over
(6) foam, sea
(7) find out
(8) home
(9) know
(10) die

For additional bibliographical references and information, see:
Child, Francis J., THE ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH POPULAR BALLAD, 1882-1898, (Reprinted in 1956 by The Folklore Press, 509 Fifth Avenue, N.Y.C.)
Coffin, T.P., THE BRITISH TRADITIONAL BALLAD IN NORTH AMERICA, American Folklore Society, 1950.
Leach, MacEdward, THE BALLAD BOOK, Harper & Bros., 1955.

SIDE I, Band 3: THE BONNY EARL O' MORAY (Child #181)

This ballad has appeared quite frequently in print since its earliest publication in the middle of the 18th century. However, it has been reported from tradition rather infrequently in both the British Isles and America, though it is sung widely by professional singers of folksongs who recognize in it a short but highly dramatic tale of treachery and ensuing lamentation.

The ballad concerns itself with the story of the murder of James Stewart, Earl of Murray, by the Earl of Huntley, in February, 1592. Rumor had it that the Earl of Murray was giving aid to Bothwell, an enemy of the King. The Earl of Huntley was entrusted to bring Murray before the King. Murray was residing at his mother's house, which was surrounded by Huntley. Murray refused to surrender and Huntley set fire to the house. Murray escaped the flames only to be captured and unmercilessly slain. An extremely popular figure, his murder resulted in a universal clamor for revenge. Huntley took refuge in having been sent under the King's commission and was never punished. The King's moderation gave rise to the never proven rumor that he excused Huntley out of jealousy for the favor with which Murray was regarded by the Queen.

The McEwens learned the tune from Malcolm Davidson, an old friend of their father's. The third stanza was learned from their mother and is rarely sung by entertainers who include this song in their repertoire.

1. Ye Heilands and ye Lowlands, oh where hae ye been?
   You hae slain the Earl o' Moray, and laid him on the green;
   He was a braw gallant and he played at the glove,
   O, the bonny Earl o' Moray, he was the Queen's love.

   Refrain: O, lang may his lady look frae the castle doon,
   Ere she see the Earl o' Moray come soonding through the toon.

2. Now, wae betide ye Huntley and wherefore did ye say,
I bade you bring him wi' you but forbade ye him to slay;
He was a braw gallant and he played at the ring,
O, the bonny Earl o' Moray, he micht hae been the King.

Refrain:

3. His lady she came doon the stair, a-wringing o' her hand,
They hae slain the Earl o' Moray, the flooer of Scotland;
He was a braw gallant and he played at the ba',
O, the bonny Earl o' Moray was the flooer amang them a'.

Refrain:

For additional texts and bibliographical information, see:
Child, Francis J., THE ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH POPULAR BALLADS, 1882-1898, (Reprinted in 1956 by The Folklore Press, 509 Fifth Avenue, N.Y.C.)
Coffin, Tristram P., THE BRITISH TRADITIONAL BALLAD IN NORTH AMERICA, American Folklore Society, 1950.

SIDE I, Band 4: CLERK SAUNDERS (Child #69) sung by Rory McEwen

This beautiful ballad of violence and tenderness has its counterparts in the balladry of the Northern European countries. It has not survived in oral tradition in English, and no versions of the ballad have been collected since the middle of the 19th century. The ballad is unreported from tradition in the United States.

The first published variant of Clerk Saunders appeared in Scott's Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, and of this ballad Scott wrote: "The tale is uncommonly wild and beautiful, and apparently very ancient.

The text given here is similar to that appearing in Scott's Minstrelsy, as it is based mainly on a version appearing in Herd's manuscript to which has been appended part of the ballad Sweet William's Ghost (Child #77).

The tune was learned by Rory McEwen from Cambridge professor M.J.C. Hodgart, who also included the tune in his very fine short analysis of the traditional ballad, titled The Ballads (Hutchinson's University Library, 1950).

1. Clerk Saunders and May Margret
Was walking on yon garden green,
And sad and heavy was the love,
I wat, that fell there twa[1] between.

2. "A bed, a bed!" Clerk Saunders said,
"A bed for you and me."
"Fie na, fie na," quo May Margret,
"Till ance that we married be."

3. "Then I'll tak' the sword frae[2] my scabbard
And slowly lift the pin,
And you may swear and save your aith[3],
I wat, ye ne'er let Clerk Saunders in.

4. "Take you a napkin in your hand,
And tie up baith[4] your bonny een[5],
And you may swear and save your aith,
Ye saw me na[6] sin' late yestreen."

5. It was aboot[7] the midnight hour,
When they asleep were laid,
When in and come her seven bold brothers
Wi' torches burning red.

6. When in and came her seven brothers,
Wi' torches burning bright;
They said, "We hae[8] but ae[9] sister,
And behold her lying wi' a knight."

7. Then up and gat the seventh of them,
And ne'er a word spake he,
And he has striped his bright brown brand[10]
Oot though Clerk Saunders fair body.

8. Clerk Saunders he started, May Margret turned
Into his arms as asleep she lay,
And sad and silent was the night
That was between their twae.

9. And they lay still and sleepit sound
Until the day began to daw[11],
And kindly she to him did say,
"It is time, my love, you were awa'[12]."

10. But he lay still and sleepit sound
Albeit the sun began to sheen[13];
She looked atween[14] her and the wa',
And dull and drowsy were his een.

11. Then in and came her faither dear,
And said, "Let a' this mourning be.
I'll carry the dead corpse to the clay,
And I'll come back and comfort thee."

12. The clinking bell gaed[15] through the toon[16]
To carry the dead corpse to the clay...
And Clerk Saunders stood at May Margret's window,
I wat, an hour afore the day.

13. "Is there any room at your heid[17], Saunders?
Is there any room at your feet,
Or any room at your side, Saunders,
Where fain[18], fain, I wad sleep."

14. "Cold mould is my covering, now,
But and my winding sheet;
The dew it falls nae sooner doon[19],
Then my resting place is weet[20].

15. "And fair Margret, and rare Margret,
And Margret o' veritie[21],
Gin e'er ye love another man,
I wat, ne'er love him as ye did me."

(1) two
(2) from
(3) oath
(4) both
(5) eyes
(6) not
(7) about
(8) have
(9) one
(10) sword
(11) dawn
(12) away
(13) shine
(14) between
(15) went
(16) town
(17) head
(18) gladly
(19) down
(20) wet
(21) truthfulness

For additional information and texts, see:
Child, Francis J., THE ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH POPULAR BALLAD, 1882-1898, (Reprinted in 1956 by The Folklore Press, 509 Fifth Avenue, N.Y.C.)

SIDE II, Band 1: THE DOWIE DENS O' YARROW
(Child #214) Sung by Rory McEwen

This ballad is included by Child in his great work under the title The Braes o' Yarrow, and is represented therein by 19 texts. The ballad was first published in 1803 by Scott in his Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border. Scott put forward the theory that the ballad referred to a duel fought between John Scott of Tushielaw and his brother-in-law, Walter Scott of Thirlestane, in which the latter was slain. Child pointed out inaccuracies in this theory but tended to give credence to the possibility that the ballad did refer to an occurance which happened in the Scott family. He did, however, recognize the possibility that it could have been based on some other occurance because such stories happened frequently in history, and also that a similar story was found in other ballads. Norman Cazden, in an article in the New York Folklore Quarterly, discusses various social and historical implications of this ballad, as well as deriding Scott's theories on the origin of the ballad.

The ballad has come down to modern times, and has been reported from tradition in Scotland in recent years. The ballad has been collected rarely in this country, with the best text being that recorded from the singing of the late George Edwards in the Catskill Mountain region of New York State.

Rory McEwen's text and tune are traditional in the McEwen family. It is, however, similar to a version printed by Scott in Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, suggesting possible ultimate derivation from a printed text.

1. Late at een, drinkin' the wine,
And ere they'd paid the lawin'[1],
They'd set a combat them between
Tae fecht[2] it in the dawin'[3].

2. O, stay at hame[4], my noble lord,
O, stay at hame, my marrow[5];
My cruel brother will you betray
On the dowie dens o' Yarrow.

3. She's kissed his cheek, she's kamed[6] his hair,
As she had done before, O;
She's belted him wi' his noble brand[7]
And he's awa' tae Yarrow.

4. As he gaed doon the Tennies Bank,
I wat[8] he gaed wi' sorrow,
For doon in a den he spied nine arm'd men
On the dowie dens o' Yarrow.

5. "O cam' ye here tae part your land,
Or cam' ye here tae borrow,
Or cam' ye here tae wield your brand
On the dowie dens o' Yarrow."

6. "I cam' no here tae part my land,
And ne'er tae beg nor borrow,
I cam' tae wield my noble brand
On the dowie dens o' Yarrow."

7. Four has he hurt and five has slain
On the bloody braes o' Yarrow,
Till that fause knicht[9] came him ahint[10]
And ran his body thorough[11]

8. "O, gentle wind that bloweth South
Frae[12] where my love repareth,
Convey a kiss from his dear mouth,
And tell me how he fareth."

9. As she gaed doon the Tennies Bank,
I wat she gaed with sorrow,
For doon in a den she spied ten slain men
On the bloody braes o' Yarrow.

(1) bill
(2) fight
(3) dawn
(4) home
(5) mate, loved one
(6) combed
(7) sword
(8) surely
(9) false knight
(10) behind
(11) through
(12) from

For additional information, texts, and bibliographical references, see:
Child, Francis J., THE ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH POPULAR BALLADS, 1882-1898, (Reprinted in 1956 by The Folklore Press, 509 Fifth Ave., N.Y.C.)
Coffin, Tristam P., THE BRITISH TRADITIONAL BALLAD IN NORTH AMERICA, American Folklore Society, 1950.

SIDE II, Band 2: BONNIE GEORGE CAMPBELL (Child #210)

This ballad appears in the Child collection under the title Bonnie James Campbell, though only one of the four variants included by Child mentions James in preference to George, who is represented in two texts.

The full ballad story has been lost and all we know is that a Campbell (be it James or George) rode out one day, fully armed, and though his saddled horse returned, he did not, much to the grief of his mother and bride.

Several attempts have been made to identify the specific Campbell mentioned in the ballad. Motherwell believed the ballad was "probably a lament for one of the adherents of the house of Argyle who fell in the battle of Glenlivet, stricken on Thursday, the third day of October, 1594." In the Geneological History of Sutherland, Sir Robert Gordon observed that Argyle lost in this battle his two cousins, Archibald and James Campbell. Maidment chose to think "that the ballad refers to the murder of Sir John Campbell of Calder by one of his own surname in 1591." In any case, suffice it to say that there were a sufficient number of Campbells killed before and after 1590, either in battle or by feud, to deter historically minded ballad students from venturing too strongly worded a guess as to the individual James or George mentioned in such a scantily detailed ballad. For all of its lack of detail, it is, nevertheless, an extremely effective and dramatic ballad.

The McEwens learned it from an old Scots Highland Aunt, who probably had it from some printed source (it is almost identical with the Child "C" text obtained from R.A. Smith's The Scottish Minstrel, Volume V, 1820-1824.)

1. High upon Hielands and laigh[1] upon Tay,
   Bonnie George Campbell rade[2] oot[3] on a day,
   Saddled and bridled, sae gallant tae see
   Hame cam' his good horse but never cam' he.

2. Doon ran his old mither, greetin'[4] fu' sair[5],
   Oot ran his bonnie bride reivin'[6] her hair,
   "My meadow lies green and my corn is unshorn,
   My barn is tae big ana my babe is unborn."

3. Saddled and bridled and booted rade he,
   A plume in his helmet, a sword at his knee,
   But toom[7] cam' his saddle a' bloody tae see,
   Hame cam' his good horse but never cam' he.

4. High upon Hielands and laigh upon Tay,
   Bonnie George Campbell rade oot on a day,
   Saddled and bridled sae gallant tae see,
   Hame cam' his good horse but never cam' he.

(1) low
(2) rode
(3) out
(4) weeping
(5) sorrowful
(6) tearing
(7) empty

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Coffin, Tristram P., THE BRITISH TRADITIONAL BALLAD IN NORTH AMERICA, American Folklore Society, 1950.

SIDE II, Band 3: THE WIFE OF USHER'S WELL (Child #79)
Sung by Alex McEwen

This fine ballad with its tale of the return of the dead has persisted better in America than in the old country. The ballad has not been reported from tradition in Great Britain since the last half of the 19th century, though numerous variants have been collected in the United States, particularly in the South. It is interesting to note that while British variants make no mention of the dead sons forbidding obstinate grief on the part of their mother, this element is very common in American texts.

Alex McEwen learned this text from a printed source and the tune in the Army. The text he sings is almost identical with the Child "A" text, which comes from Scott's Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, as taken down from the recitation of an old woman in West Lothian, and it is probably the ultimate source of the text sung by him. The last stanza, in which the sons say their farewell, brings in mention of "the bonny lass that kindles my mother's fire." This stanza has not come down in tradition in any reported variant, and it is suspected that this was Scott's own contribution to the text reported by him.

Child thought quite highly of this ballad and wrote: "Nothing that we have is more profoundly affecting."

1. There lived a wife at Usher's Well,
   And a wealthy wife was she;
   She had three stout and stalwart sons
   And sent them o'er the sea, O,
   And sent them o'er the sea.

2. They hadna been a week away,
   A week, but barely three,
   When news came to the carline[1] wife
   Her sons she'd never see, O,
   Her sons she'd never see.

3. "I wish the wind may never cease,
   Nor fashes[2] in the flood,
   Till my three sons come hame tae me
   In earthly flesh and blood, O,
   In earthly flesh and blood.

4. It fell about the Martinmas
When nichts[3] are lang and murk[4],
The Carline wife's three sons came hame
And their hats were made o' birk[5], O,
Their hats were made o' birk.

5. It neither grew in syke[6] nor ditch,
Nor yet in ony sheugh[7];
But at the gates o' Paradise
That birk grew fine eneugh[8], O,
That birk grew fine eneugh.

6. Blow up the fire my maidens,
Fetch water frae the well,
For a' my house shall feast this nicht[9]
Since my three sons are well, O,
Since my three sons are well.

7. The cock he hadna crowed but once,
And clapped his wings ava[10],
When the youngest to the eldest said,
"Brother, we must awa'[11], O,
Brother, we must awa'.

8. "The cock doth crawl[12], the day doth dawl[13],
The channerin'[14] worm doth chide[15],
Gin[16] we be missed oot o' our place,
A sair pain we maun[17] bide, O,
A sair pain we maun bide.

9. "So fare thee weel, ma mither dear,
Farewell to barn and byre[18],
And fare thee well, the bonny lass
That kindles ma mither's fire, O,
That kindles ma mither's fire.

(1) old woman	(7) ravine	(13) dawn
(2) troubles	(8) enough	(14) fretting
(3) nights	(9) night	(15) scold
(4) dark	(10) at all	(16) before
(5) birch	(11) away	(17) must
(6) trench	(12) crow	(18) cow-house

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Coffin, Tristram P., THE BRITISH TRADITIONAL BALLAD IN NORTH AMERICA, American Folklore Society, 1950.

SIDE II, Band 4: WILLIE'S FAIR (Child #215)

This ballad is included by Child under the titles Rare Willie Drowned in Yarrow or The Water o' Gamrie. The story of the full ballad concerns Rare Willie who has promised to marry Meggie. The bridegroom with a large company is mounted to ride for the bride. The bridle party comes to the river and all pass the stream safely, but Willie is washed from his saddle. The rest ride on to the church. The bride asks where is the man who was to marry her, and is told that Willie is drowned. She goes in search of him and finds his drowned body.

In an article in the New York Folklore Quarterly, Norman Cazden suggests that Child #215 "actually consists of two distinct ballads, one a group of fragmentary verses relating to a drowning tragedy at the Yarrow River, the other a more or less connected but obscure narrative whose setting is Gamrie." He further believes that the Rare Willie Drowned in Yarrow fragments and Child #214 (The Braes o' Yarrow) stem from a single source and form parts of the same ballad.

The fragmentary text sung by the McEwens to a tune learned from their grandfather is almost identical with Child's "A" text, and is a variant of the Rare Willie Drowned in Yarrow strain which Mr. Cazden convincingly suggests belongs to Child #214.

1. Willie's rare and Willie's fair,
And Willie's wondrous bonny,
And Willie's hecht[1] to marry me,
Gin[2] ere he marries ony[3].

2. Yestreen I made my bed fu' braid[4],
The nicht I'll mak' it narrow,
For a' the lee long winter's nicht,
I lie twin'd[5] oer my marrow[6].

3. O, cam' ye by yon water side,
Pu'd[7] you the rose or lily?
Or cam' ye by yon meadow green,
Or saw you my sweet Willie?

4. She socht[8] him high, she socht him laigh[9],
She socht him braid and narrow,
Syne[10] in the cliftin' o' a craig[11],
She's found him droon'd[12] in Yarrow,
She's found him droon'd in Yarrow.

(1) promised	(5) separated	(9) low
(2) before	(6) mate, loved one	(10) Then
(3) any	(7) pulled	(11) crag
(4) broad	(8) sought	(12) drowned

For additional information and bibliographical references, see:
Child, Francis J., THE ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH POPULAR BALLADS, 1882-1898, (Reprinted in 1956 by The Folklore Press, 509 Fifth Avenue, N.Y.C.)
Coffin, Tristram P., THE BRITISH TRADITIONAL BALLAD IN NORTH AMERICA, American Folklore Society, 1950.
Cazden, Norman, THE STORY OF A CATSKILL BALLAD, New York Folklore Quarterly, Winter, 1952, pp. 243-266.

SIDE II, Band 5: BINNORIE (Child #10) Sung by Rory McEwen

This ballad is better known as The Twa Sisters under which title Child printed 27 texts in his great work. It is one of the most widely distributed of all British Traditional ballads and has proven excellent material for detailed study.

The earliest English language variant in print is a broadside copy dating from the middle of the 17th century, though it may have been sung in tradition from an earlier date. Paul G. Brewster, who has made an extensive study of the ballad, believes the ballad is Scandinavian in origin, probably started in Norway sometime before the 17th century, whence it spread to Scotland, England and America. It should be noted that there is a corresponding folk tale tradition which is Slavic in origin.

An element which has been left out of this version, and which Child considered the heart of the ballad, concerns the making of a musical instrument from the drowned sister's body, the instrument in turn revealing the identity of the murderer. Most variants collected recently indicate the tendency on the part of contemporary folksingers to eliminate this supernatural motif (or, for that matter, most supernatural details from the old ballads that they may still know.)

Also of considerable interest to students of the ballad are the various ballad refrains. Most Scottish variants are identified by the "Binnorie" or "Edinburgh" refrains. American versions, which are derived mainly from English variants, contain the familiar "bow down" or "rosemary" refrains.

Rory McEwen learned this version from a field recording of an Aberdeenshire singer in the collection of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

1. There were twa sisters lived in a glen,
   Binnorie, O Binnorie,
   And the bonny miller laddie cam' a-courtin' o' them,
   By the bonny mill dams o' Binnorie.

2. O, sister, O, sister, will ye tak' a walk,
   Roon'[1] by the dams o' Binnorie,
   For tae hear the blackbird whistle ower his notes,
   By the bonny mill dams o' Binnorie.

3. O, they walked up, and sae did they doon,
   Binnorie, O Binnorie,
   Till the elder stepped aside and danged[2] the younger in,
   To the deep mill dams o' Binnorie.

4. O, sister, O, sister, stretch oot your hand,
   Binnorie, O Binnorie,
   And I'll gie you my gold and a theft o' a' my land,
   For the bonnie miller laddie o' Binnorie.

5. It wasna for your money that I danged ye in,
   Binnorie, O Binnorie,
   It's ye bein' saie fair, love, and I sae verra grim,
   For the bonny miller laddie o' Binnorie.

6. O, miller, O, miller, rend[3] oot your dam,
   Binnorie, O Binnorie,
   For there's some grand lady or some douce[4] swan
   Floatin' up and doon the water o' Binnorie.

(1) round
(2) pushed
(3) empty
(4) gentle

For additional texts, information, and bibliographical references, see:
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Grieg, Gavin, & Kieth, Alex., LAST LEAVES OF TRADITIONAL BALLADS AND BALLAD AIRS, The Buchan Club, Aberdeen, 1925.
Parker, Harbison, THE TWO SISTERS - GOING WHICH WAY?, Journal of American Folklore, Volume 64, 1951.
Brewster, Paul G., THE TWO SISTERS, Folklore Fellows Communications, No. 147, Helsinki, 1953.

Recorded by Kenneth S. Goldstein

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