

AN ANSWER TO  
ANDREW MOFFAT'S SMALL POEM,  
ON SINGING  
CHURCH-MUSIC.

By R. HOWDEN.

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[SHOULD the Reader suppose the following verses borrowed from, or built upon MACFARLANE's Letter, lately published on the same subject, the Author assures him, that this was written previous to his seeing the above Letter; though he did not intend it at that time for publication: neither does he come forward as a combatant with MACFARLANE, but that at the mouth of at least two witnesses the thing might be established.]

MY books I saw the other day  
Were a' gone to confusion;  
Some's frontispiece was torn away,  
Some wanted the conclusion,  
Some bound in calf, and some in boards,  
Some hanging a' in tatters,  
Some fu' o' sense and weighty words,  
And some o' childish matters,

So I fell to and turn'd them o'er,  
 As they lay a' like lumber,  
 And dadit aff the dust and stour  
 Frae ilka page and number.  
 Of ilka piece I took a peep,  
 I view'd their title pages,  
 Just as a herd looks o'er his sheep,  
 To know their health and ages.

Here's Hervey—Milton's Paradise,  
 The Monk and Hab the Miller,  
 Young's Love of Fame comes in a trice,  
 And Jack-the-Giant-killer.  
 Here Anson round the world sails,  
 There's Douglas and Maobeath,  
 Here's Mother Bunch's Fairy Tales,  
 There's Doctor Dod on Death,

Here's ——— what is this! 'tis something new!  
 But wha I wonder's aught it!  
 It has come here—but when or how;  
 I'm sure I never bought it.  
 Yet mine or no, it's a' the same  
 As far as I have seen;  
 The piece is verse, the author's name  
 Is Andrew in the Dean.

With that I drew in o'er a stool,  
 Sat down afore the ingle,  
 Laid aff my hat, drew on my cowl,  
 And rattled o'er the jingle.  
 Now, Andrew, I've read through and through  
 The whole of your epistle,  
 And thinks, wha cannot sing wi' you  
 Should be content to whistle.

For me, I cannot take in hand  
 A right to criticise ye;  
 But as an answer ye demand,  
 I mean to try and please ye.  
 But if in this I chance to fail,  
 Though ye should be offended,  
 Since I'm begun to tell my tale,  
 So I'm a-mind to end it.

But poets are a nasty pack,  
 Aye snarling and sneering;  
 As soon's a neighbour turns his back  
 His character they're tearing.  
 So, Andrew, do not think it strange  
 To own me as a brother,  
 For aye 'till ance our natures change,  
 We'll carp at ane another.

So to begin with your address,  
 Which intimates a quarrel;  
 As ye have said so, I confess  
 Ye seem a *canker'd carle*.  
 Your *claws* are sharp, as ye have said,  
 They prick and scratch us sair;  
 But here perhaps ye'll find a blade  
 To gi'e your nails a pare.

I doubt not your intentions may;  
 Be good. But to proceed—  
 The *youth* ye met yon Sabbath day  
 Has been a youth indeed:  
 I guess frae a' the tales he told  
 (Although I do na ken)  
 He's been a youth of eight years old,  
 Or might be gaen i' ten

t say ye met with such a youth,  
 And so ye took occasion,  
 (Because he could not stop your mouth  
 With arguments and reason)  
 To scandalise a country side,  
 Insult a congregation,  
 And send the rumour broad and wide  
 Of singing folks damnation!

Your similie sustains a place  
 That never was disputed;  
 For if the fountain's foul and base  
 The stream must be polluted.  
 Hence ye infer, the men that sings  
 Can neither love nor fear;  
 But who has puddled a' their springs,  
 And kepted yours so clear?

Are ye more wise and farer seen  
 Than ony other living!  
 That ilka man may close his een,  
 And follow you to Heaven;  
 To bring the Scriptures on your side,  
 Ye cite them out of season.  
 He who takes scripture for his guide,  
 Should balance truth with reason.

For me, I cannot mention half  
 Th' absurdities ye bring in,  
 For instance, what has *Aaron's calf*  
 To do with modern singing?  
 The *braying ass*, the *singing bird*,  
 And siclike observations?  
 Should I recite them word for word,  
 'Twould tire the reader's patience.

That tunes have not the Scripture test,  
 Ye seem to be persuadad,  
 And idol worship at the best,  
 By men's invention added.  
 Such notions, Andrew, are absurd,  
 As I shall show you soon;  
 The Spirit says, who adds a *word*,  
 But not, who adds a *tune*.

There is a fable on record,  
 A servant as ye ken,  
 Who gat five talents from his lord,  
 In time repaid him ten.  
 The second took a similar plan,  
 He added two to two.  
 The third received only one—  
 He was a man like you.

Now, if we enter any place  
 Where there's a crowd of people,  
 Some men perhaps are singing *base*,  
 And women singing *trible*.  
 While ears and voices, hearts and throats,  
 Go hand in hand together,  
 In unison they swell their notes,  
 And strike with ane anither.

But some there be who drones and croons,  
 Minds neither ane nor ither,  
 Who kens no more of *time* nor *tunes*,  
 Then Hackie o'er her fodder.  
 Their voices ne'er were made to sing,  
 Their ears no notes can relish;  
 And if ye speak of such a thing,  
 They'll ca'd absurd and foolish.

But why should tuneless folks oppress  
 The singers with such fury,  
 As if what talents they possess,  
 They ought to hide and bury.  
 Nor should the man for music made  
 Despise a Christian brother,  
 Because his organ never played  
 A crotchet, slur, nor quaver.

If singing really be a sin,  
 Then singers merit slander,  
 But if the matter lies within,  
 We ought to judge with candour,  
 Let every man do what he can  
 To sing, and praise his Maker;  
 Let them that will not drive be drawn:  
 The strong should help the weaker.

For hark ye what the Scripture says,  
 Though fashions now are changed;  
 Look only back to David's days  
 How matters were arranged.  
 The singers foremost took the lead,  
 The players next forewent them  
 And those who cou'dna keep the thread  
 Came droning up behind them.

When Jacob's son's from Egypt fled,  
 The sea on foot they cross'd;  
 Where all their foes whom Pharaoh led  
 Were in the waters lost.  
 When seated on the other shore  
 They sang the *Song of Moses*;  
 No doubt they made a noble choir,  
 So many different voices.

There lasses lilting sweet and shrill,  
 Men singing hoarse and hollow;  
 Some led the airs with art and skill,  
 While some could only follow.  
 That men o' sense were there 'tis plain,  
 And men o' judgment shallow,  
 And some had tunes, and some had na  
 Just like the folk o' FALA.

And when that Moses led them through  
 The desert for Canaan,  
 There discontented folks like you,  
 Oft vex'd the holy man.  
 Some wanted *flesh*, some wanted *bread*,  
 And something ay was wrang.  
 While others never fash'd their head,  
 But carried on and sang.

When Sisera, as stories tell,  
 Had in a tent conceal'd him,  
 When Heber's wife took up the mall,  
 And to the pavement nail'd him.  
 Then Barak and Debora soon  
 Sang to the congregation  
 A song, with a *repeating tune*,  
 For such a great salvation.

Now ye may say they had no *tunes*,  
 And ye may raise a clanger,  
 And ask, was it *St Paul's*, *St John*  
 Or did they ca'd the *Bangor*.  
 Or whether sang they fast or slow,  
 However this may be,  
 The Sripture says they *sang* you know,  
 And that's enough for me.

If thus we do the Scriptures read,  
 It too might be disputed  
 If such a person had a head,  
 Since nothing's said about it.  
 There's many simple things like that  
 The Scripture has omitted;  
 It has not room for idle chat  
 To please the self-conceited.

The man that's willing to dispute,  
 He never wants a plea;  
 For instance, ye may ask what fruit  
 Was the *forbidden tree*.  
 But what is that for you or me  
 To stand about debating?  
 The fruit was *fruit*, the tree a *tree*,  
 And Adam's sin was eating.

To David's psalms is oft affix'd  
 The subject they were made on;  
 Sometimes the *tune* that suits the text,  
 And *whistle* it was play'd on.  
 But names o' tunes like names of towns,  
 Or man or woman's name,  
 Will not translate to other tongues,  
 But always stands the same.

Yet music in the *Hebrew tongue*  
 Had *quavers*, *flats*, and *sharps*.  
 Or how could e'er their psalms been sung,  
 Or play'd on flutes or harps.  
 So after a' that ye have said,  
 Your arguments are frail,  
 The sweetest song that e'er was made  
 Without a *tune's* a *tale*.



But time goes on with rapid flight,  
 The wheel is always moving,  
 And whether morning, noon, or night,  
 'Tis ours to be improving.  
 So, Andrew, let the *young* alane,  
 For while you're stan'ing ta'king,  
 Ye might been past the next mile stane  
 Had ye been busy wa'king.

For old and young have each their blots,  
 And fau'ts that need detection,  
 And some improve their neighbour's spots  
 To hide their ain defection.  
 Yet he who most pretends to teach  
 The road that leads to Canaan,  
 Points to a place he ne'er can reach,  
 While like a *guide post* stan'ing.

Our *style* in prayer and *tunes* in praise,  
 Ye say should *common* be,  
 The man that understands this phrase  
 Is wiser, sir, than me.  
 If this can be a rule complete  
 To either man or woman,  
 Then we may pray upon the *street*  
 The practice ance was *common*;

The Romish priest has here a prop  
 By such absurd debating,  
 Because 'tis common for the *Pope*  
 To say his prayers in Latin.  
 The thing that's common now-a-days  
 Was ance a world's wonder:  
 And singing *tunes* in solemn praise  
 Was held an arrant blunder.

The *Stilt* and *Elgin* ance were *tunes*—  
 Our Fathers did revere them :  
 But those who dar'd to mint *St John's*  
 They would not sit to hear them.  
 The *tunes* at which ye startle now,  
 And absolutely refuse them,  
 Will soon be common though they're new,  
 If we in *common* use them.

I'm no' musician, that-I grant,  
 Though I can sing a few tunes :  
 I ken the *French*, the *Burgher's rant*,  
 And twa'r three o' the new tunes ;  
 Yet I can hear a lively tune  
 Wi' little molestation.  
 Or if it be an old wife's croon,  
 It gie's me no vexation.

Yet some there be who never seek  
 Instructions from a teacher,  
 But travel two'r three miles a-week  
 To criticise the *preacher*.  
 When by the gospel or the law,  
 They cannot contradict him,  
 Then the *Precenter* like a ba',  
 Out o'er the *Desk* they'll kick him.

The daisy fair that decks the lee,  
 And violets in the vale,  
 Yields to the wasp and to the bee,  
 A sweet or bitter meal.  
 So *tunes* and stile, and this and that,  
 Meets the fanatic's snarl ;  
 He seldom fails to find a fault  
 Who comes to pick a quarrel.

Religion, Andrew's like a race,  
 In which we're call'd to run;  
 And he that stands or slacks his pace,  
 Can ne'er expect to win.  
 There may be youths, I do not doubt,  
 Or hear ye standing knocking.

In meekness, charity, and love,  
 But harder to *redeem*.  
 The twig in youth is easy bent  
 To where it should incline,  
 While rugged storms must tear and rend,  
 Old trunks like yours and mine.

As if the Spirit by the truth,  
 That fills the sacred page,  
 Would paint the piety of youth  
 The infamy of age.  
 So he begins in early times  
 A doleful tale to tell,  
 How by an *Elder* brother's crimes  
 The pious Abel fell.

When men and vice went hand in hand,  
 'Till faith could scarce be found,  
 A mighty flood o'erwhelm'd the land,  
 And Adam's sons were drown'd.  
 An ark prepar'd of pond'rous weight,  
 Upon the waters hung,  
 The number sav'd in it were eight,  
 And six of those were *young*.

Or look we down to Dothan's plains,  
 Where shepherds dwelt of old,  
 The youngest there of Jacob's sons  
 His *Elder* brethren sold,  
 When Samuel was to Eli sent,  
 The pious youth obeys,  
 And bade the hoary head repent  
 And mend his crooked ways.

In Nineveh, as we have heard;  
 What wickedness was done?  
 Yet see the guilty father spar'd,  
 To save the guiltless son.  
 Or look and list to latter days,  
 There hear the *suckling* sing,  
 And *infants* swell their *Saviour's* praise,  
 While *Elders* slew their KING.

Why therefore should the man of age  
 The stripling disregard,  
 Since children are God's heritage,  
 The womb's fruit his reward.  
 Let young and old go hand in hand,  
 Our journey still pursue,  
 And when we reach the promis'd land,  
 We'll sing a song that's new.

THE END.

Edinburgh: Printed by J. MORRIS.