

## Old Time Songs—No. III.

## SONG—AFTON WATER.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,  
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;  
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,  
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Thou stock-dove whose echo resounds thro' the glen,  
Ye wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den,  
Thou green-crested lapwing, thy screaming forbear;  
I charge you disturb not my slumbering fair.

How lofty, sweet Afton, thy neighboring hills,  
Far mark'd with the courses of clear, winding rills;  
There daily I wander as noon rises high,  
My flocks and my Mary's sweet cot in my eye. 7

How pleasant thy banks and green valleys below,  
Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow;  
There oft, as mild ev'ning weeps over the lea,  
The sweet-scented birk shades my Mary and me.

Thy crystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides,  
And winds by the cot where my Mary resides;  
How wan on thy waters her snowy feet lave,  
As gathering sweet flow'rets she stems thy clear wave.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,  
Flow gently, sweet river, the theme of my lays;  
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,  
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

The author of the above, and many of the sweetest Scottish songs, including Highland Mary, Auld Lang Syne, John Anderson My Joe, was Robert Burns, born near the town of Ayr, Scotland, January 25, 1759 (the year of Wolfe's conquest of Canada); died July 21, 1796. His father, though very poor, contrived to give his son a good education; and when not able to send his children to school, taught them himself in the evening when his day's work was ended. The poet had a robust frame and active body, and at fifteen years of age could do the work of a man. In the case of Burns, as in that of Sappho, it was love that taught him song. A "bonnie sweet sonsie lassie" was associated with him in the labors of the harvest field, and the sweet verses she sang inspired him with the idea of writing songs. Burns continued to write verses, and finally collected all he had written into a little volume of poems which he sold by subscription. This book made him famous. He went to Edinburgh, where he was received in the highest society the city afforded. Here he was feted and petted, and made much of, which ended in his ruin. While he continued to write beautiful poems, he fell into the habit of drink. This weakness ruined his life, and left his wife

and children penniless. Yet every true Scotsman loves the memory of Robert Burns, and so long as Scotland endures his songs will be sung, and his *Cotter's Saturday Night* will be read around the firesides.

## SONG—DARLING NELLIE GRAY.

There's a low green valley on the old Kentucky shore,  
There I've whiled many happy hours away,  
A sitting and a singing by the little cottage door,  
Where lived my darling Nellie Gray.

## CHORUS,—

Oh! my poor Nellie Gray, they have taken you away,  
And I'll never see my darling any more,  
I'm sitting by the river and I'm weeping all the day,  
For you've gone from the old Kentucky shore.

When the moon had climbed the mountain, and the stars  
were shining too,

Then I'd take my darling Nellie Gray,  
And we'd float down the river in my little red canoe,  
While my banjo sweetly I would play. *Chorus.*

One night I went to see her, but "she's gone!" the neighbors say,

The white man bound her with his chain;  
They have taken her to Georgia for to wear her life away,  
As she toils in the cotton and the cane. *Chorus.*

My canoe is under water, and my banjo is unstrung,  
I'm tired of living any more,  
My eyes shall look downward, and my song shall be unsung,

While I stay on the old Kentucky shore. *Chorus.*

My eyes are getting blinded, and I cannot see my way;  
Hark! there's somebody knocking at the door—  
Oh! I hear the angels calling, and I see my Nellie Gray,  
While I stay on the old Kentucky shore.

## CHORUS, to the last verse,—

Oh! my darling Nellie Gray, up in heaven there they say,  
That they'll never take you from me any more,  
I'm a coming—coming—coming, as the angels clear the way  
Farewell to the old Kentucky shore.

How this song came to be written, recalls another incident in the times of slavery. Benjamin R. Hamby lived in Cincinnati, Ohio. At the period of his life in which the song was written, he was a teacher in a little academy in Seven Mile, Butler Co., Ohio. On his way from Cincinnati to Seven Mile he read an account of a beautiful quadroon girl who had been torn away from her slave lover and carried to the Southern markets to be sold. The quadroon's name was Nelly Gray. The account so impressed Mr. Hamby that he utilized the incident as the subject of the song, the words of which were almost