

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Donald Cowper and His Man

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They've gane to the fair;

They've gane to court a bonnie lass,

But fient a ma [sic] was there:

But he has gotten an auld wife,

And she's come hirpling hame;

And she's fa'n o'er the buffet-stool,

And brake her rumple-bane.

Sing, Hey Donald, how Donald,

Hey Donald Cowper;

He's gane awa' to court a wife,

And he's come hame without her.

Herd 1776, II.229, whence Chambers SSPB (1862), 125-6 (with music), who corrects line 4 to "fient a ane"; and Montgomerie SC (1948), without the chorus. The later versions spell "Couper". SMM IV (1792), 344 has variations, perhaps introduced by Burns, as Stenhouse thinks: cho. 3 seek 1.1 O Donald 1.2 Held to a Highland fair, man, 1.3 And a' to seek 1.4 ane . . . man. [The alternate lines have the extra syllable.] 2.1 At length he got a Carlin gray [etc.]. The 2nd strain has affinities with "There was a lad", i.e. I fee'd a lad at Martinmas, and/or Macpherson's Rant. The tune is in Playford Dancing Master (9th ed., 1695, 169; repr. in Simpson, BBBM 160) as Daniel Cooper, and to words in PPM V.88, "Good Honest Trooper take warning by Donald Cooper", beginning "A Bonny Lad came to the Court", a ballad of 1685 on the dangers of catching pox. Very many other ballads exist to the tune, which has many titles as a consequence. MS

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