

When I Was a Little Boy

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1.

When I was a little boy, striking at the studdy,
I had a pair o' blue breeks, and O but they were duddie!
As I strook they shook, like a lamb's tailie;
But now I'm grown a gentleman, my wife she wears a
railie!

2.

When I was a young man, I yarkit at the studdy, O,
I had a pair o' grey breeks, and they were unco duddy, O;
When I shook they shook, like a lammie's tailie, O,
Gin my sang disna please, sing anither to yerselie, O.

(1) Chambers PRS (1826), 297; (1847), 287; (1870), 155; NAE (1932), 29 [3 lammie's] , whence Montgomerie SNR (1946), 124 (no. 157) ["a wee boy" etc.]. Chambers identifies the protagonist as a John Callender, a blacksmith who worked at Edinburgh and Stirling Castles before the Revolution (of 1688). The railie of line 4 is a short-sleeved over-bodice made of finer linen than ordinary, worn on dress occasions--kirk on Sundays, etc. "To wear a rail was considered as a mark of wealth formerly" (E.D.D.). With the incipit, cf. "Robin Tamson's Smiddy", by Alex. Rodger (1784-1846), to the tune The Cornclips, whose 18th-century text begins: "My mither men't my auld breeks, and wow, but they were duddie, O"; Rodger's text continues "She sent me to get Mallie shod at Robin Tamson's smiddy, O."

(2) Forfar variant: Rymour Club Misc. I (1906-11), 212.

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