

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Bonnie Saint John

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Faer hae ye been, my bonny Saint John,
Ye've bidden sae lang, ye've bidden sae lang?
Faer hae ye been, my bonny Saint John,
Ye've bidden sae lang, ye've bidden sae lang?

Up in yon hill, and down in yon glen,
And I cou'dna win hame, and I cou'dna win hame;
Now fat will ye gie me unto my supper,
Now fan I come hame, now fan I come hame?

A clean dish for you, and a clean spoon,
For byding sae lang, for byding sae lang;
A clean dish for you, and a clean spoon,
For byding sae lang, for byding sae lang.

Peter Buchan, *Anc. Ballads & Songs* (1828; repr. 1875, 264); with altered spelling in *Montgomerie SC* (1948), 182 (no. 344).

This is a bowdlerised descendant of "The Shepherd and his Wife", in *Herd* 1776 I.182 (Hecht, *Herd MSS.* 163 ff.), a dialogue between the two:

The shepherd's wife cries o'er the lee,
"Come hame will ye, come hame will ye?"
The shepherd's wife cries o'er the lee,
"Come hame will ye again e'en, jo?"

"What will ye gie me to my supper,
Gin I come hame, gin I come hame?
What will ye gie me to my supper,
Gin I come hame again e'en, jo?"

[similarly:]

"Ye's get a panfu' of plumpin parrage,
And butter in them"

"Ha, ha, how! It's naething that dow;
I winna come hame, and I canna come hame! . . ."

[repeat st. 1, 2]

"Ye's get a cock well totled i' the pat,
An ye'll come hame, &c."

[repeat st. 4, 1, 2]

"Ye's get a hen well boiled i' the pan,
An ye'll come hame, &c."

[repeat 4, 1, 2]

"A well made bed, and a pair of clean sheets,
An ye'll come hame, &c."

[repeat 4, 1, 2]

"A pair of white legs and a good cogg-wame,
An ye'll come hame, &c."

"Ha, ha, how! that's something that dow,
I will come hame, I will come hame!
Ha, ha, how! that's something that dow,
I'll haste me hame again e'en, jo!"

Burns altered this for SMM (IV, no. 362). With the "good cogg-wame" of 19.1 cf. the coggie (= "womb") in Burns' version of "The Ploughman"; but here perhaps it means "bowl-shaped belly". Note that all the items offered by the wife have sexual connotations: cock and hen are self-explanatory, while porridge and butter occur as aphrodisiacs in several sources. (See note to "A' the Nicht".) The Opies (Singing Game, 1985, 270) contrast this with "Lazy Mary", which does not seem to have a Scottish version; it is probably of U.S. extraction.

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