

The Earl of Mar's Daughter (Child 270)

IT was intill a pleasant time,
Upon a simmer's day,
The noble Earl of Mar's daughter
Went forth to sport and play.

As thus she did amuse hersell,
Below a green aik tree,
There she was a sprightly doo
Set on a tower sae hie.

'O Cow-me-doo, my love sae true,
If ye'll come down to me,
Ye'se hae a cage o guid red gowd
Instead o simple tree:

'I'll put gowd hingers roun your cage,
And siller roun your wa;
I'll gar ye shine as fair a bird
As ony o them a'.'

But she hadnae these words well spoke,
Nor yet these words well said,
Till Cow-me-doo flew frae the tower
And lighted on her head.

Then she has brought this pretty bird
Hame to her bowers and ha,
And made him shine as fair a bird
As ony o them a'.

When day was gane, and night was come,
About the evening tide,
This lady spied a sprightly youth
Stand straight up by her side.

'From whence came ye, young man?' she said;
'That does surprise me sair;
My door was bolted right secure,
What way hae ye come here?'

'O had your tongue, ye lady fair,
Lat a' your folly be;
Mind ye not on your turtle-doo
Last day ye brought wi thee?'

'O tell me mair, young man,' she said,
'This does surprise me now;
What country hae ye come frae?
What pedigree are you?'

'My mither lives on foreign isles,
She has nae mair but me;
She is a queen o wealth and state,
And birth and high degree.

'Likewise well skilld in magic spells,
As ye may plainly see,
And she transformd me to yon shape,
To charm such maids as thee.

'I am a doo the live-lang day,
A sprightly youth at night;
This aye gars me appear mair fair
In a fair maiden's sight.

'And it was but this verra day
That I came ower the sea;
Your lovely face did me enchant;
I'll live and dee wi thee.'

'O Cow-me-doo, my luve sae true,
Nae mair frae me ye'se gae;'
'That's never my intent, my luve,
As ye said, it shall be sae.'

'O Cow-me-doo, my luve sae true,
It's time to gae to bed;'
'Wi a' my heart, my dear marrow,
It's be as ye hae said.'

Then he has staid in bower wi her
For sax lang years and ane,
Till sax young sons to him she bare,
And the seventh she's brought hame.

But aye as ever a child was born
He carried them away,
And brought them to his mither's care,
As fast as he coud fly.

Thus he has staid in bower wi her
For twenty years and three;
There came a lord o high renown
To court this fari ladie.

But still his proffer she refused,
And a' his presents too;
Says, I'm content to live alane
Wi my bird, Cow-me-doo.

Her father sware a solemn oath
Among the nobles all,
'The morn, or ere I eat or drink,
This bird I will gar kill.'

The bird was sitting in his cage,
And heard what they did say;
And when he found they were dismiss,
Says, Wae's me for this day!

'Before that I do langer stay,
And thus to be forlorn,
I'll gang unto my mither's bower,
Where I was bred and born.'

Then Cow-me-doo took flight and flew
Beyond the raging sea,
And lighted near his mither's castle,
On a tower a gowd sae hie.

As his mither was wauking out,
To see what she coud see,
And there she saw her little son,
Set on the tower sae hie.

'Get dancers here to dance,' she said,
'And minstrells for to play;
For here's my young son, Florentine,
Come here wi me to stay.'

'Get nae dancers to dance, mither,
Nor minstrells for to play,
For the mither o my seven sons,
The morn's her wedding-day.'

'O tell me, tell me, Florentine,
Tell me, and tell me true,
Tell me this day without a flaw,
What I will do for you.'

'Instead of dancers to dance, mither,
Or minstrells for to play,
Turn four-and-twenty wall-wight men
Like storks in feathers gray;

'My seven sons in seven swans,
Aboon their heads to flee;
And I mysell a gay gos-hawk,
A bird o high degree.'

Then sichin said the queen hersell,
'That thing's too high for me;'
But she applied to an auld woman,
Who had mair skill than she.

Instead o dancers to dance a dance,
Or minstrells for to play,
Four-and-twenty wall-wight men
Turnd birds o feathers gray;

Her seven sons in seven swans,
Aboon their heads to flee;
And he himsell a gay gos-hawk,
A bird o high degree.

This flock o birds took flight and flew
Beyond the raging sea,
And landed near the Earl Mar's castle,
Took shelter in every tree.

They were a flock o pretty birds,
Right comely to be seen;
The people viewd them wi surprise,
As they dancd on the green.

These birds ascended frae the tree
And lighted on the ha,
And at the last wi force did flee
Among the nobles a'.

The storks there seized some o the men,
They coud neither fight nor flee;
The swans they bound the bride's best man
Below a green aik tree.

They lighted next on maidens fair,
Then on the bride's own head,
And wi the twinkling o an ee
The bride and them were fled.

There's ancient men at weddings been
For sixty years or more,
But sic a curious wedding-day
They never saw before.

For naething coud the companie do,
Nor naething coud they say
But they saw a flock o pretty birds
That took their bride away.

When the Earl Mar he came to know
Where his dochter did stay,
He signd a bond o unity,
And visits now they pay.