

### III.

#### AN OLD SCOTTISH VIOLIN TUTOR. BY HENRY GEORGE FARMER, M.A., PH.D., F.S.A.Scot.

Once upon a time the harp was considered to be the most important instrument of music in Scotland. That was in the days of Auld Lang Syne.<sup>1</sup> About the close of the fifteenth century the lute began to oust the harp from its position of eminence, and quite a number of lute books, in manuscript, have come down to us from the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> The viol, too, was favoured, and some of its music has also been spared.<sup>3</sup> Towards the close of the seventeenth century the violin attained such popularity in Scotland as to quite eclipse the lute and other stringed instruments. The instrument was by no means new to Scotland, as we read that among the minstrels of Perth who played before Edward I., in 1303-4, were "fiddlers, psalterists, and others."<sup>4</sup>

From the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century the music publishers of Scotland issued a considerable quantity of music for the violin, mostly of the dance type, and for many years it was my pleasure to collect specimens of this music, which I catalogued, not according to composers or arrangers, but under printers and publishers. This collection is now in the Library of the University of Glasgow. At present, however, we are concerned with the performers rather than with the printers of this type of music.

Names of famous Scottish fiddlers in the eighteenth century are

<sup>1</sup> See *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, vol. xiv. p. 123, and vol. xv. p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Rowallan MS.* (c. 1612-28) and *Guthrie MS.* (c. 1675-80) in the Library of the University of Edinburgh, and the *Skene MS.* (c. 1615-35) and transcripts of the *Straloch MS.* (c. 1627-9) in the National Library of Scotland.

<sup>3</sup> Transcripts of the *Leyden MS.* (c. 1639) and the *Blaikie MS.* (c. 1683-92) in the National Library and Wighton Library, Dundee, respectively.

<sup>4</sup> *Catalogue of Documents relating to Scotland*, vol. i. p. 474.

plentiful, and among them William McGibbon (*d.* 1756), Daniel Dow (*d.* 1783), "King" McGlashan (*d.* 1797), "Red Bob" Mackintosh (*d.* 1807), and Neil Gow (*d.* 1807). Yet although we have quite a wealth of

A  
COLLECTION

*Of the Best and Most Favourite Tunes*

FOR THE  
VIOLIN

IN FOUR PARTS

*Also an Introduction and Directions for Playing the Violin.*

PERTH.

*Collected and Transcribed by*

JAMES  GILLESPIE.

M,DCC,LX,VIII.

information about *what* was played by these *virtuosi* we know very little about *how* it was played. It is for this reason that I have considered it worth while calling your attention to an old manuscript Scottish violin tutor of the mid-eighteenth century in my possession. Above is the title page of the manuscript.

I acquired this manuscript in 1923 from Harold Reeves, the London bookseller, but I was unable to ascertain anything concerning previous ownership. Indeed, I have not been able to learn anything about James Gillespie, the compiler of the work. The title page shows us that he was a Freemason, and this might enable some record to be turned up in Perth, although there is no mention of him in D. C. Smith's *History of the Ancient Masonic Lodge of Scone and Perth, No. 3.* (Perth, 1898.)

So far as I am aware, this is the oldest violin tutor of Scottish provenance that has been preserved, and there is only one older manuscript of violin music recorded—the *Cumming MS.* (1723-24), formerly in the possession of the late Frank Kidson.<sup>1</sup> The manuscript is well written, and the music is copied in an excellent hand, quite equal to that of a copperplate engraver. The work is divided into an Introduction and Four Parts. The Introduction contains the "Directions for Playing the Violin." Part I. is devoted to "Airs and Marches" (30); Part II. to "Scots Tunes" (61); Part III. to "Minuets" (57); and Part IV. to "Hornpipes, Jiggs, and Reels" (107).

The Introduction, or "Directions for Playing the Violin," is not original. It is based on a work entitled *The Art of Playing the Violin*, which appeared among a series of tutors issued in London in 1731 under the general title of *The Music-Master*, whose author was a certain Peter Prelleur, a Frenchman by birth. It was reissued in various forms, one under the title of *The Complete Tutor for the Violin* (1750), whilst another was printed by Thomson & Son about 1765.

From internal evidence it appears that Gillespie of Perth did not borrow from the original edition of 1731 nor from that of 1750. It must have been from a later issue, perhaps that of Thomson & Son about 1765. Indeed, Gillespie's spelling leads one to surmise that he may not have borrowed directly from a printed source, but at second hand, through a manuscript copy. On the other hand, his vagaries in spelling may have been due to the vernacular. At any rate, Gillespie's manuscript shows more correct grammar and punctuation.

As for the matter that is borrowed, Gillespie is by no means slavish. If he thinks that he can improve by omission or commission he does so. For instance, Prelleur, the author of the original, realises that one of the difficulties of beginners in violin-playing is to put their fingers in the proper places on the strings. His method of overcoming this difficulty was to mark the places on the fingerboard with ink or bits of paper. Gillespie has no use for it. In other cases, Gillespie corrects errors in the original, although they are palpable.

<sup>1</sup> There are, however, several Scottish printed works of violin music of an earlier date, such as those of Oswald (c. 1740), McGibbon (1742), Bremner (1759), Stewart (1761-62), and Peacock (1762).

Twelve lessons or exercises are given for the beginner to try his "prentice hand." These, if mastered, were evidently considered a sufficient training in those days. Here is the list :—

- i. Lesson. Key C. *A Minuet.*
- ii. Lesson. Key A [Minor]. *Britange.*
- iii. Lesson. Key A [Minor]. *Good Night &c.*
- iv. Lesson. Key G. *Miss Carnegies Minuet.*
- v. Lesson. Key D. *Lord Howe's Minuet.*
- vi. Lesson. Key D. *Lady Ann Erskine's Minuet.*
- vii. Lesson. Key D. *Feltons Minuet.*
- viii. Lesson. Key D. *Mr Dundass's Minuet.*
- ix. Lesson. Key A. *Minuet by McGibbon.*
- x. Lesson. Key A. *Tweed Side.*
- xi. Lesson. Key F. *Corrente by Correllie.*
- xii. Lesson. Key B [Flat]. *Minuet by Giminani.*

Of these twelve items, five are Scots tunes, and three are by celebrated composers—Corelli (1653-1713), Geminiani (1680-1761), and Felton (1713-69). Strange to say, all of the lessons are minuets, no example of duple or quadruple being given so as to prepare beginners for a reel or strathspey.

Part I. comprises "Airs and Marches." They have little interest, since they are what we generally find in English collections of the period, although Gillespie borrowed some of them from Bremner's *Collection of Airs and Marches* (London, c. 1765), the melodies of which he did not scruple to alter. The fact that he spells the names of Corelli, Geminiani, and others incorrectly may lead us to suppose that he did not copy their compositions from printed sources. They had probably become part of the repertory of Scottish fiddlers by this time.

*PART I. Airs and March's.*<sup>1</sup>

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Lord Lenox's March.                   | 16. Gavot by Mr Handle.                          |
| 2. Duet by Mr Handel.                    | 17. Dorchester March.                            |
| 3. Gavot by Correllie.                   | 18. Hearts of Oak. A Song.                       |
| 4. Count Sax's March.                    | 19. Charles the 12th King of Swedene's<br>March. |
| 5. King George's March.                  | 20. Gilderoy.                                    |
| 6. A March.                              | 21. Britania.                                    |
| 7. Belisle March.                        | 22. An Air.                                      |
| 8. Britons Strike Home.                  | 23. Thro the Wood Ladie. A Song.                 |
| 9. Prince Eugene's March.                | 24. Air by Mr Handel.                            |
| 10. Count Brown's March.                 | 25. The Grenadiers March.                        |
| 11. A March in Solomon.                  | 26. Gavott by Chs. McLean.                       |
| 12. The Duke of Holstine's March.        | 27. Lord Loudans March.                          |
| 13. Skelcher's March.                    | 28. Old Buffs March.                             |
| 14. Granoë's March.                      | 29. A March in Rinaldo.                          |
| 15. The Edinburgh Train Band's<br>March. | 30. Air by Handel.                               |

<sup>1</sup> The spelling is given exactly as it appears in the MS. The Index, however, sometimes gives another spelling.

Part II.—“Scots Tunes,” has greater interest. The same may be said of Part III.—“Minuets,” and Part IV.—“Hornpipes, Jiggs, and Reels.” Although much of the material contained in these sections is to be found in the printed collections of Oswald,<sup>1</sup> McGibbon,<sup>2</sup> Bremner,<sup>3</sup> Neil Stewart,<sup>4</sup> and Peacock,<sup>5</sup> yet there is additional interest for the following reasons:—

- (1) Tunes are registered that do not occur elsewhere.
- (2) Tunes are included here before they appear in print.
- (3) Tunes are recorded in different versions from those in print.

*PART II. Scots Tunes.*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 31. Gillierankie.                                | 60. Kathrine Ogie.                              |
| 32. Up in the Morning Early.                     | 61. Eatrick Banks.                              |
| 33. The Coalliers Daughter.                      | 62. Saw ye my Love Peggie.                      |
| 34. The Yellow Hair Ladie.                       | 63. I Wish my Love were in a Mire.<br>New Sett. |
| 35. I'll Never Leve the.                         | 64. Moggie Lawther.                             |
| 36. Pinkie House.                                | 65. To Danton Me.                               |
| 37. New Highland Ladie.                          | 66. John Hays Boney Lassie.                     |
| 38. The Bottom of the Punch Bowl.                | 67. The Lasse of Patie's Mill.                  |
| 39. For Lake of Gold she's left me.              | 68. Over the Watter to Charlie.                 |
| 40. Woes my Heart that we<br>Should Sunder.      | 69. Johne Cope are you Wakeing Yet.             |
| 41. Rosslie Castle.                              | 70. The Ducks dang Over My Dadie.               |
| 42. Lo Down in the Broom.                        | 71. Joy to Great Ceaser.                        |
| 43. The Isle of Sky. A Scots<br>Measure.         | 72. The Merry Wives of Carlile.                 |
| 44. The Lass of Livingstone. A<br>Scots Measure. | 73. The Noble Reace of Jenken.                  |
| 45. McLauchlen's Scots Measure.                  | 74. My Own kind Dearie.                         |
| 46. Balginie's Bowling Green.                    | 75. Where shall Our Goodman Lay.                |
| 47. My Apron Dearie.                             | 76. Duncan Gray.                                |
| 48. Bonney Jean.                                 | 77. Cock up your Bevar.                         |
| 49. The Charmes of Lovely Peggie.                | 78. Lumps of Pudens.                            |
| 50. Peggie Grives Me.                            | 79. Whisle Ore the Leve Od.                     |
| 51. Miss Hamelton's Delight.                     | 80. The Flowres of the Forrest.                 |
| 52. The Dutch Skiper.                            | 81. Grigs Pipes.                                |
| 53. Logan Watter.                                | 82. Black Jock.                                 |
| 54. The Lilles of France.                        | 83. Jackie Latten.                              |
| 55. Widow art thou Wakeing.                      | 84. Roring Willie.                              |
| 56. Jack and his Trowsers On.                    | 85. Sandie Rea &c.                              |
| 57. She Rose and let me in.                      | 86. Comely Garden. A Reel.                      |
| 58. Saw ye na Eppie Mc Enab th'<br>day.          | 87. John Come Kiss me Now.                      |
| 59. Throw the Wood Ladie.                        | 88. O'er the Moor to Maggie.                    |
|  | 89. Carrick Fergues. New Set.                   |
|  | 90. Sours Plumbs of Gallowshilds.               |
|  | 91. A Reel.                                     |

<sup>1</sup> Oswald (James), *A Curious Collection of Scots Tunes for a Violin, Bass Viol, or German Flute* (Edin., c. 1740); *A Collection of Curious Scots Tunes* (Lond., c. 1742); *The Caledonian Pocket Companion* (12 bks., Lond., c. 1742-60); *A Collection of 43 Scots Tunes* (Lond., n.d.), etc.

<sup>2</sup> McGibbon (William), *A Collection of Scots Tunes for a Violin, Hautboy, or German Flute*, (3 bks., Edin., 1742, 1746, 1755).

<sup>3</sup> Bremner (Robert), *Thirty Scots Songs* (2 bks., Edin. [1757], c. 1759); *A Collection of Scots Reels and Country Dances* (Edin. [1759]); *A Curious Collection of Scots Tunes* (Edin. [1759]).

<sup>4</sup> Stewart (Neil), *A Collection of the Newest and Best Reels and Country Dances* (Edin. [1761-62]).

<sup>5</sup> Peacock (Francis), *Fifty Favourite Scotch Airs for a Violin* (Aberdeen [1762]).

*PART III. Minuets.*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 92. The State Houlders Minuet.               | 120. Miss Woffington's Minuet.                               |
| 93. The Duke of York's Minuet.               | 121. Prince Charles's Minuet.                                |
| 94. Lady Ann Dundass's Minuet.               | 122. Italian Minuet.   |
| 95. Lady Belly Erskine's Minuet.             | 123. Princess Amelia's Minuet.                               |
| 96. Miss Fletchers Minuet.                   | 124. Miss Monro's Minuet.                                    |
| 97. Lady Rothes or Lord Mark<br>Kers Minuet. | 125. Miss Pringle's Minuet.                                  |
| 98. Miss Lenoy's Minuet.                     | 126. Miss Porterfeeld's Minuet.                              |
| 99. Miss Bowls Minuet.                       | 127. Prince Ch : New Minuet.                                 |
| 100. Lady Mary Powiss's Minuet.              | 128. Lady Betty Cochrane's Minuet.                           |
| 101. Sir Charles Sedlys Minuet.              | 129. Countess of Weem's Minuet.                              |
| 102. Virjina Minuet.                         | 130. Jigge Minuet.   |
| 103. Miss Carmichals Minuet.                 | 131. Lady Peggie Stewart's Minuet.                           |
| 104. Countess of Coventrie's Minuet.         | 132. Lady Faney Erskine's Minuet.                            |
| 105. Miss Caw's Minuet.                      | 133. Lord Crawford's Minuet.                                 |
| 106. Signo Pissqualie's Minuet.              | 134. Lady Dundass's Minuet.                                  |
| 107. Miss Montgomrie's Minuet.               | 135. Miss Mary Porterfeeld's Minuet.                         |
| 108. Miss Stewart's Minuet.                  | 136. She's Swetest when She's Naked<br>or Miss Faw's Minuet. |
| 109. Miss Maley Edmonstons Minuet.           | 137. A Minuet.   |
| 110. Lady Banff's Minuet.                    | 138. Oswalds Bass Minuet.                                    |
| 111. Mr Pitt's Minuet.                       | 139. Mary Scott.   |
| 112. French Minuet.                          | 140. A New Minuet.   |
| 113. Mrs Bouth's Minuet.                     | 141. Lulleys Minuet.   |
| 114. Lady Boyd's Minuet.                     | 142. Bellizie Minuet.  |
| 115. The Neapoliton Minuet.                  | 143. Cukoo Minuet.   |
| 116. Marshal Sax Minuet.                     | 144. Weidmans Minuet.  |
| 117. A Minuet.                               | 145. A New Minuet.   |
| 118. Major Erskine's Minuet.                 | 146. Scarabanda by Correllie.                                |
| 119. Miss Mally Montgomrie's<br>Minuet.      | 147. Germain Minuet.   |
|  | 148. Italian Minuet.   |

*PART IV. Hornpipes, Jiggs, and Reels.*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 149. The Flowers of the Forest. A<br>Reel.       | 162. Lady Hariot Hope's Reel.              |
| 150. Make the Bed. A Reel.                       | 163. The Soldier Ladie. A Reel.            |
| 151. Love's Reel.                                | 164. A Reel.                               |
| 152. Burford Races. A Reel.                      | 165. The Duke of Athol's Blew<br>Britches. |
| 153. New Hay.                                    | 166. The Duke of Perth's Reel.             |
| 154. Inch of Perth. A Reel.                      | 167. Miss Blairs Reel.                     |
| 155. Up the Moor Amongst the<br>Heather. A Reel. | 168. A Reel.                               |
| 156. The Lads of Air. A Reel.                    | 169. Sir Alexr Mc donald's Rant.           |
| 157. Green grow's the Rashes. A<br>Reel.         | 170. Lasses of Duncce. A Reel.             |
| 158. Sweet Mally. A Reel.                        | 171. Suky Bids Me.                         |
| 159. Lady Sinclers Reel.                         | 172. Shan Trowes.                          |
| 160. The Royal Exchange Reel.                    | 173. For Lake of Gold Jige.                |
| 161. Lady Fanie Montgomries Reel.                | 174. Linkem Dodie. A Reel.                 |
|  | 175. The Pretty She. A Strathspey.         |
|  | 176. Strathspey Reel.                      |

*PART IV. Hornpipes, Jiggs, and Reels—continued.*

177. Wanton Towdie. A Reel.  
 178. Prince Charlie's Delight.  
 179. Green Slives.  
 180. Jacks Alive.  
 181. Geld him Lasses. A Hornpipe.  
 182. I'll lay no more with my Mother.  
 183. Carouse and be Merry.  
 184. O If I had such a Lassie as this.  
 185. Daniel Couper.  
 186. Rigadown.  
 187. King Charles Jige.  
 188. Unfortunate Jock.  
 189. I'll Kick the World Before Me.  
 190. Boll of Bear.  
 191. Dustie Miller. A Hornpipe.  
 192. If the Kirk would lett me be.  
 193. The Birks of Abergeldie. A Reel.  
 194. Cammron's got his Wife Again. A Reel.  
 195. The Highland Hill's.  
 196. Keep the Country bonny Lassie. A Reel.  
 197. Peas Straw. A Reel.  
 198. The Ranting Highlandman. A Reel.  
 199. Hopeton House. A Reel.  
 200. Wellcome Home my Dearie.  
 201. Invercald Reel. A Strathspey.  
 202. Highland watchs farewell to Ireland.  
 203. Lick the Ladle Sandie. A Reel.  
 204. Struan Robertsons Rant.  
 205. Reel of Tulloch.  
 206. Will you go to Sheriff Moor.  
 207. Peggie's Wedding.  
 208. Kiss the Lass ye like best. A Reel.  
 209. Ye'll ay be Wellcome back again.  
 210. New Christmass.  
 211. Garick Reel.  
 212. Merry Dancers.  
 213. Merrly Dance the Quaker.  
 214. Bring hir ben and Bore hir beller.  
 215. Sing Tantarah Raragh Rouges all.  
 216. A Trumpet Jigge.
217. I wish you would marrey me now. A Reel.  
 218. Russans Rant. A Strathspey Reel.  
 219. Breas of Angus. A R[ee].  
 220. Lady Jean Hoom's Reel.  
 221. The Boney wi thing. A Reel.  
 222. I've got A Wife of [my] Own. A Reel.  
 223. The Free and Accepted Mason.  
 224. Lochyell's Rant. A Strathspey.  
 225. The Lass of Elgin. A Reel.  
 226. The Marques of Granby's Delight.  
 227. Hornpipe.  
 228. A Strathspey Reel.  
 229. My Wife's a Wanton wi thing.  
 230. My Minnie [s] Ay Glowran O'er Me.  
 231. Carrick Fergues. An Irish Reel.  
 232. Love in a Village. A Reel.  
 233. Bernards Well. A Reel.  
 234. Hallow Fair. A Reel.  
 235. Lord Kellys Reel.  
 236. Lord Kinairds Reel.  
 237. Jannie dang the Weaver. A Reel.  
 238. I'll Make you be fain to follow me. A Reel.  
 239. O'er the Moor among the Hedder. A New Set. A Reel.  
 240. Cameronians Rant.  
 241. Campbells are Coming Oho.  
 242. Short Apron.  
 243. Blair Drummonds Reel.  
 244. The Parson and his Boots.  
 245. Tulloch Gorm. Reel.  
 246. Mary Gray. A Reel.  
 247. Mr Reidheads Reel.  
 248. Had the Lass till I winn at hir.  
 249. Miss Robertsons Reel.  
 250. Nancy Dawsons Hornpipe.  
 251. Miss Frassers Reel.  
 252. Irish Reel.  
 253. Kincathrins Reel.  
 254. Miss Frassers Reel. New Set.  
 255. Captain Brouns Reel.  
 256. Peas Straw. A New Set.

Those who know the famous picture of Neil Gow (*d.* 1807) will recall that he holds his violin with his chin on the *right* side of the tail-piece. We know from M. l'Abbé's *Principes du violon pour apprendre le doigt de cet instrument* (c. 1760) that the modern way of holding the instrument with the chin on the *left* side was already in vogue elsewhere. At the same time it has to be admitted that even in England the old method obtained as late as 1825, since Paine advocates it in his *Treatise on the Violin*.

Another feature of the old school of violin playing was that, instead of the instrument being held horizontally, the head was lowered so as to enable the elbow to rest on the hip.

The old method was not conducive to rapid cross fingering, whilst double fingering, *i.e.* placing one finger on two strings, was by no means easy. Those who are acquainted with Scottish dance music will know that many of the reels and strathspeys are extremely difficult to play, especially the former, if the proper *tempi* are adhered to. Since the ordinary eighteenth-century Scottish fiddler was neither a Paganini nor a Kreisler, one naturally wonders how he managed to play these reels and strathspeys when in addition to the technical difficulties of the music there was also a cumbrous method to contend with. This tutor reveals one of the tricks of the old fiddlers which enabled them to overcome certain difficulties in fingering and bowing. This was accomplished by the adoption of a "scordatura," as it was called, which was a variation from the ordinary tuning of the violin. Several examples of this are given in this tutor.

A reel called *Grigs Pipes* (second half) is conventionally noted as follows:—



To simplify the playing the four strings were tuned to A-E-a-c $\sharp$ , instead of the usual G-D-a-e. The result was that the performer actually



fingering the strings as follows, which considerably simplified both cross and double fingering:—



Similarly, a jig called *Black Jock* had a tuning A-E-a-e, instead of the conventional tuning. This was also used for another reel called *My Own Kind Dearie*. Here are two passages from *Black Jock* which will further illustrate how the fingering and bowing were simplified. The conventional way of noting the jig was thus:—



With the tuning A-E-a-e, the fingering was accomplished by this scheme:—

In the following passage the conventional performance necessitated that the first finger had to take extraordinary positions:—

Under the special tuning it was simplicity itself, since the two lower notes had become open strings:—

What is more, the resonant tone obtained by the use of open strings served very often to give the necessary emphasis to the accented beats of the bar, and even acted as a sort of pedal, whilst sometimes it enabled the performer to obtain the drone effect of the bagpipe.

Historians of Scottish music cannot afford to neglect this old manuscript Violin Tutor, not only because of the features just outlined, but also on account of the different versions of many of the national melodies.