

The Packman

George Murray

This song was written by a shepherd from Carsphairn called George Murray.

George grew up on a farm but decided to try his hand at being a packman in Grimsby before returning home to Galloway and enlisting in the Army, later fighting in the Boer War. In the song he is treated well by the boss at first, but he quickly becomes homesick and discovers that the job is not as easy or as profitable as he had thought. He decides to return to Galloway, and warns other young men against trying the packman lifestyle. A packman is a travelling salesman. It is published in a book of poetry called 'Frae the Heather' by his father Thomas Murray of Moorbrock, Carsphairn parish, Kirkcudbright (1897).

Words

leal-hearted - loyal
nicht - night
gaed doon - went down
frae - from
weel - well
meal-brose - an uncooked form of porridge
staw - grew tired of
whiskin' - travelling around in a hurry
wad - would
ava - at all
a'maist ilka - almost every
awa - away
ken - know
braw - beautiful
noo - now
ane - one

Lyrics

I'm a poor shepherd laddie and Murray's my name
To be a Scotch packman to Grimbsy I came
And left my auld father and mother and a'
My leal-hearted cronies in wild Gallowa'

The nicht that I landed I gaed doon the street
And just in the bull ring the boss I did meet
He glowered in my face and then held out his paw
Saying "are ye my laddie frae wild Gallowa'?"

He then took me in and he treated me weel
But wi a' his kindness frae hame I did feel
O' fine English feeding I soon got a staw
And sighed for the meal-brose o' wild Gallowa'

I was the next morning rigged out wi' a pack
And sent off a whiskin' some orders to tak
But soon I found whiskin' wad no do ava
And wished I was safe back in wild Gallowa'

I met wi refusal a'maist ilka place
They shook their heads at me, banged doors in my face
And some let their dogs out to fright me awa
Insultin' the laddie frae wild Gallowa'

Some orders I took that he wouldna supply
And when we next met they wad ask to ken why
They ca'd me a lousy Scot, swindler and a'
Ill used the poor laddie frae wild Gallowa'

Then since I'm a failure at this loopie trade
I'll back to fair Scotland, re-don my grey plaid
And roam wi my dog in the heather sae braw
And sniff the fresh breezes in wild Gallowa'

Noo a' ye young lads who wad gang to the pack
Frae ane that's been there this advice ye may tak
Wi' herding' or ploughing, tho' poorer yer fa'
Ye'll find mair contentment in wild Gallowa'

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