

Hector MacNeill (1746-1818)

5 *My Boy Tammy*

“Whar hae ye been a’ day,
My boy Tammy?
Whar hae ye been a’ day,
My boy Tammy?”
“I’ve been by burn and flow’ry brae, 5
Meadow green and mountain grey,
Courting o’ this young thing
Just come frae her mammy.”

“And whar got ye that young thing,
My boy Tammy?” 10
“I gat her down in yonder howe,
Smiling, on a broomy knowe,
Herding a wee lamb and ewe
For her poor mammy.”

“What said ye to the bonny bairn, 15
My boy Tammy?”
“I praised her een sae lovely blue,
Her dimpled cheek and cherry mou’, —
I pree’d it aft, as ye may trow:
She said she’d tell her mammy. 20

“I held her to my beating heart,
My young, my smiling lammie:
‘I hae a house — it cost me dear;
I’ve wealth o’ plenishin’ and gear —
Ye’se get it a’ were’t ten times mair, 25
Gin ye will leave your mammy.’

“The smile gaed aff her bonny face:
‘I maunna leave my mammy!
She’s gi’en me meat, she’s gi’en me claise;

She’s been my comfort a’ my days; — 30

My father's death brought mony waes:
I canna leave my mammy.'

“We'll tak her hame and mak her fain,
My ain kind-hearted lammie.
We'll gie her meat, we'll gie her claise; 35
We'll be her comfort a' her days.'
The wee thing gies her hand and says:
'There! gang and ask my mammy.'”

“Has she been to the kirk wi' thee,
My boy Tammy?” 40
“She has been to the kirk wi' me,
And the tear was in her e'e;
For, oh! she's but a young thing
Just come frae her mammy.”

(From Sir George Douglas, ed. *The Book of Scottish Poetry*.
London: Fisher Unwin, 1911)