"OLD AIRS AND SONGS:\nMelodies Once Popular in Yorkshire,\nIII.\nTHE CRACFY PLOUGHBOY.\n\nIf you please to draw near till the truth I declare,\nIn case of a farmer what I be in childhood,\nA pretty Yorkshire boy he had for his man,\nFor to do his business, his name it was John.

One morning right early he call’d for his man,\nAnd when he came to him, as we understand,\nHe said, "Take this cow to Hereford Fair;\nShe is in good order, and her I can spare."

Away the boy went with the cow in his hand;\nHe came to the fair as you shall understand,\nAnd in a short time he met with three men,\nAnd sold one of them his cow for six pound ten.

They went to an alehouse in order to drink,\nWhere the farmer paid down the boy his chink.\nThe boy to the mistress then did say,\"What must I do with this money, I pray?"
"I’ll see it within thy coat-lining," said she;\"For fear on the road you robbed should be,"\n"Close by was a highwayman drinking his wine,\Thought he to himself,"The money is mine."

The boy took his leave, and homeward did go;\nThe highwayman did follow after also,\And soon overtook him upon the highway.\"Well overtook, young man," he did say,\"Will you get up behind me?" the highwayman said.\"How far are you going?" replied the young lad.\"Three or four miles, for what I do know."
"So he got up behind, and away they did go.\They rode till they came to a very dark lane;\"Now," said the highwayman,"I’ll tell you plain,\Deliver your money, without noise or style.\Or else I shall certainly take your sweet life."

The boy soon found there was no time to dispute,\So he quickly alighted without fear or doubt;\His heart his coat linings—the money he took,\And among the long grass he strewed it about.

The highwayman alighted from off his horse,\But little did dream it was for his loss;\Before he could find the money, they say,\The boy jumped on horseback and rode fast away.

The highwayman shouted, and begged him to stay,\But the boy would not hear him, but kept on his way;\And to his old master, the boy he did bring,\Horse, saddle, and bridle, a very good thing.

The master, he came to the door and said thus,\"What, the plague is my cow turned into a horse."
"The boy, said,"Good master, your cow I have said,\But was robbed on the way by an highwayman bold.\My money I strewed about on the ground,\For to take it up the rogue lighted down;\And while he was putting it into his purse,\To make you amend I came off with his horse."

The master he laughed till his side he could hold,\And said,"For a boy, thou hast been very bold;\And as for the villains thou hast served him right,\And put upon him a real Yorkshire bite."
They searched his bags, and quickly they told\Two hundred pounds in silver and gold,\And two brace of pistols; the boy he did vow,\"I think, my good master, I’ve well sold your cow."

The boy, for his courage and valor so rare,\Three parts of the money he got for his share.\And now, since this highwayman has lost all his store,\He may go a robbing until he gets more.

The scene from a ballad sheet seemingly of fairly early date in the writer’s possession. The verse printed to the music is from another version of the same ballad in "A Pictorial Pack of Ballads," where the locale is fixed in Hertfordshire, and having other verbal differences. When highwaymen and footpads were a power in the land, and furnished episodes in the travels of our forefathers, ballads relating to their exploits were very common. Harrison Ainsworth has embodied several in the novel of "Rookwood," and Sam Weller in "Pickwick" sings what Dickens doubtless intended as a parody of the ballad. The essence of the above Yorkshire song occurs in several forms, but the present is one of the earliest found.

Another copy of the same is in "A Pictorial Pack of Ballads," by W. H. Logan, 1849, an Edinburgh volume of much value for ballad lore. The song is there stated to be printed from a chap-book, circa 1782, and is there called the "Yorkshire Riddle." Mr. Logan has not attached any tune, but as it is written to one of the airs that has a "Derry Down" refrain, the present writer has set it to one of its several beats, and is most likely the one it was originally sung to. This tune is "The King and the Abbot," a familiar ballad, and it is found in an early form in D’Urfe’s "wit and Mirth," IV., 1719, and united to many ballads in the six volumes of Watte’s "Martial Miscellany," 1729-1731, as well as in some of the ballad operas of the day. It is unnecessary to inform readers who have a tolerable acquaintance with old and modern dialect that the peculiar metre of "Derry Down" was employed largely by writers (chiefly humorous) for some curious effect in a narrative form. In other instances "De Ho, Dubbin" was the stanza selected.

To the "Derry Down" songs at least three distinct tunes were used, all good and totally different from each other. It is intended to reproduce them in these volumes, in conjunction with the Yorkshire ballads sung to these.

The seemingly meaningless words "Derry Down" are claimed by Welsh writers (with which truth it would be difficult to determine) as a corruption of words which formed part of a Druidical chorus sung on the gathering of the sacred milestones. The supposed ancient Welsh title given in confirmation of this bears some degree of resemblance to "Hay Down Derry Down," as translated means, "let us away to the oaken grove" (see Jones’s "Musical and Poetical Wells of the Welsh Bard," and "Fromo" gives a passing allusion to this matter.

Frank Kidson Scrapbook - Entries in Leeds Mercury 1890s