



# Bunting for the defence!

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## MR. BUNTING'S MUSIC.

In the *Beau Monde*, or *Monthly Register*, for April, published a few days ago in London, we find the following Letter; which is followed, in the Work that it is taken from, by copious Extracts from Mr. BUNTING's Treatise, with an intention declared of continuing them in future Numbers: —



*To the Editor of La Beau Monde*

Sir.—The liberality of your critique on my “General Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland” which appeared in your number for March, I am perfectly sensible of. It is a duty both to you and myself to explain the ground (since you have alluded to it) on which my work is declared to be the *first* GENERAL Collection of ancient Hibernian Melodies.

The fact is, about thirteen years ago my original publication, containing sixty-six airs, appeared; intended as the beginning of a series, which was to embrace the entire body of the music of my native country. That volume, flattered by the early notice of Dr. Crotch, must be considered as closely connected with, and as parent to, my more enlarged and splendid plan, of which the first volume, largely published in London, is to form a part. Whatever were the merits or defects of that first attempt, in the year 1796, Sir John Stevenson, of whom you speak, introduced, several years afterwards, no less than *eleven* airs in the first volume of his Melodies, which contained, in all, only *five* more.

It is far from my wish to depreciate any attempt to extend the knowledge of Irish Music, in whatever form it appears; I must, however, be suffered to say, what is obvious on the face of our respective works, that they move in different spheres, and aim at as different objects. One of these consists of tunes generally known in Great Britain and Ireland, forming a *selection* which an able musician could produce in his elbow chair; the other is a *collection*, which embraces similar objects, with the advantage of having every well-authenticated, valuable, and really *ancient* melody that could be restored, by the active exertions of almost my life-time — a Collection, which, at this period, it is out of the power of any other person to make.

As every observation from your pen claims my regard, allow me to state the reason which induced me to set those airs, which are adapted for the voice, in keys which you allege are under the compass of female powers. Had those Airs been intended for the use of *professional* singers, the adopted keys should have been higher; but the point in view was, to pitch them for the *general* standard. The main intent of the work was to render them fit for ordinary use; and I had learned, in

the practice of my profession, that it is a general complaint against vocal music, that it is often set beyond the reach of the generality of voices\*.

The obliging anxiety which you declare for the appearance of my *second* Volume demands that I should inform you that I am at this moment busily preparing it; and that, independently of the mere music, it will contain (among other matter) a fund of original information, tending to throw light on the degree of improvement which Ireland must have attained in the art of Composition, at a very early period.

I am, Gentlemen, with due respect,  
Your obedient and obliged servant,  
E. BUNTING.

*Belfast, April 17, 1810.*

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\* For instance, when it ascends above G in alt, not one in twenty private female singers can reach A, the note above, without *screaming*. I therefore preferred those keys to which the voice was competent in the upper notes, without forcing. I might indeed have altered the Melodies in some parts, where they go low, but not without taking liberties with the airs, which I should not, however, have thought myself warranted in doing.