

Manx Notes 575 (2022)

“SING DARK-EYED SUSAN FOR THE GIRLS” *

(1878)

In a satirical “letter” that appeared in the *Mona’s Herald* in 1878, the context of which appears to be a veiled—or rather not so veiled at the time—attack on, it would seem, the Vicar of St German’s, there is a mention of singing “Dark-eyed Susan for the girls.” This is a song known also as Black-Eyed Susan (Laws O28) & (Roud 560), and it was written by John Gay and dates from 1733, one of the many such compositions that have passed over into the tradition and circulated by broadsides. The summary of the song is taken here from the Ballad Index: Susan boards a ship to seek William. He hears her voice and greets her on the deck, promising to be true wherever he goes. Susan bids a sad farewell as the ship prepares to leave. Standard fare it must be said for a folk song, but here an addition to English songs from broadsides known in the Island.

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See, Pseud [signed as “Fisherman’s Wife”], “[Letter to the Editor],” *Mona’s Herald* 14 August 1878: 5b; <https://www.fresnostate.edu/folklore/ballads/LO28.html>.



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