

Chapter Thirteen - "30 Elizabethan Songs - With Documentation"

## *King Edgar Deprived/ The Three Ravens*

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### References:

#### Words and Music

Ravenscroft's *Melismata*, 1611

*The Garland of Good Will*, 1592-3 by Thomas Deloney

Date. The Garland of good Will is first mentioned by Nash in *Haue with You to Saffron*, Walden, 1596 (see Introduction, p. xii). But the following entry occurs in the Stationer's Registers of 1592-3:

John Wolfe	Entered for his copie. Vnder the hand of
	Edward White the bishop of London and a master warden
the xxvij	of Styrop; a book intituled The garden
August 1596	of goodwill. vjd.

Note: It is assumed that the clerk wrote 'garden' in mistake for garland and this is the actual entry of Deloney's Garland of good Will. If this is so, it fixes the date of composition as before March 5, 1593, the date of the last entry in that register. (the 1596 date was when a "copie" was made.) The present reprint is from the edition of 1631. Deloney died in April of 1600.

Some text and images were scanned from a transcription printed in the 1912 edition of Deloney's Works, edited by F. O. Mann, published by Oxford University Press. One such was **A NEW SONG OF KING EDGAR**, &c. (Page 305.)

Another copy in *Percy Folio*.

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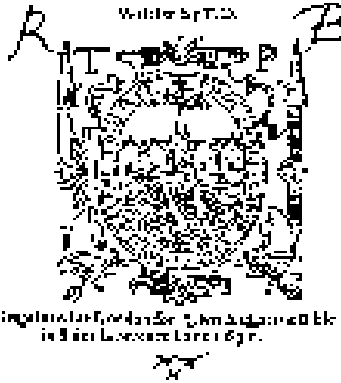
### Commentary:

Since Deloney died in April of 1600, any work attributed to him must be prior to that time. This first set of words is not commonly known but is set to this tune:

THE  
GARLAND  
OF  
Good Will.

Divided into three parts: Containing  
many pleasant Songs, and pretty  
parables, fables, new  
Masks.

With a Table to trade the names of all the Songs.



**A New Song of King Edgar, King of England,  
how he was deprived of a Lady, which  
he loued, by a Knight of his Court.**

*To be sung in the old ancient sort, or else to the Tune of  
Labandalashot.*

<The 'old ancient sort' is the tune 'Three Ravens'>

WHenas King Edgar did gouerne this land,  
Downe, adowne, adowne, down, down,  
And in the strength of his yeeres did stand,  
Call him downe  
Such praise was spread of a gallant Dame,  
Which did through England carry great fame,  
With a downe, derry, derry, derry, derry downe.

And she a Lady of noble degree, Downe, etc.  
The Earle of Deuonshires daughter was she. Call him, etc.  
The King which lately had buried his Queene,  
And not long time had a Widdower beene, With a downe, etc.

Hearing this praise of this gallant Maid,  
Vpon her beauty his loue he laide,  
And in his sighes he wold often say,  
I will go send for that Lady gay:

Yea, I will go send for that Lady bright,  
Which is my treasure and delight:  
Whose beauty, like to Phoebus beames,  
Doth glister through all Christian  
Realmes.

Then to himselfe he would reply,  
Saying, How fond a Prince am I,  
To cast my loue so base and low,  
Vpon a Gyrl I do not know:

King Edgar will his fancy frame,  
To loue some peerelesse Princely Dame  
The daughter of a royall King,  
That may a worthy dowry bring:

Whose matchlesse beauty brought in  
place,  
May Estrilds colour cleane disgrace.  
But senseless man, what do I meane,  
Vpon a broken reede to lean:

Or what fond fury doth me moue  
Thus to abase my dearest loue?  
Whose visage, grac't with heauenly hue  
Doth Helens honour quite subdue:

The glory of her beauties pride,  
Sweet Estrilds fauor doth deride.  
Then pardon my vnseemely speech,  
Deare loue and Lady, I beseech:

For I my thoughts will henceforth frame  
To spread the honour of thy name.  
Then vnto him he cal'd a Knight,  
Which was most trusty in his sight,

And vnto him thus did he say:  
To earle Orgarus, go thy way,  
Where ask for Estrild, comely Dame,  
Whose beauty went so farre by Fame.

And if thou find her comely grace,  
As Fame hath spred in euery place:  
Then tell her Father she shall be  
My crowned Queene, if she agree.

The Knight in message did proceed,  
And into Deuonshire with speed:  
But when he saw the Lady bright,  
He was so raiisht at her sight,

That nothing could his passion moue,  
Except he might obtaine her loue:  
For day and night while there he staid,  
He courted still this peerelesse Maid:

And in his suit he shewed such skill,  
That at the length won her good-will,  
Forgetting quite the duty tho  
Which he vnto the King did owe.

Then comming home vnto his Grace,  
He told him with dissembling face,  
That those reporters were to blame,  
That so aduanc't the Maidens name.

For I assure your Grace (quoth he)  
She is as other women bee:  
Her beauty of such great report,  
No better than the common sort,

And farre vnmeet in euery thing,  
To match with such a Noble King.  
But though her face be nothing faire,  
Yet sith she is her Fathers heire,

Perhaps some Lord of high degree,  
Would very faine her husband be:  
Then if your Grace would giue consent,  
I would my selfe be well content,

The Damsell for my wife to take,  
For her great Lands and Liuing's sake.  
The King whom thus he did deceiue,  
Incontinent did giue him leaue:

For on that point he did not stand,  
For why, he had no need of Land.  
Then being glad he went his way,  
And wedded straight that Lady gay:

The fairest creature bearing life,  
Had this false Knight vnto his wife:  
And by that match of high degree,  
An Earle soone after that was he.

Ere he long time had married beene,  
That many had her beauty seene:  
Her praise was spred both farre and  
neere;  
The King againe thereof did heare:

Who then in heart did plainly proue,  
He was betrayed of his loue.  
Though thereat, he was vexed sore,  
Yet seem'd he not to grieue therefore,

But kept his countenance good and  
kinde,  
As though he bare no grudge in minde.  
But on a day it came to passe,  
When as the King full merry was,

To Ethelwood in sport he said,  
I muse what cheer there would be made  
If to thy house I should resort  
A night or two for Princely sport:

Hereat the earl shewd countenance glad,  
Though in his heart he was sore sad:  
Saying, Your Grace should welcome be,  
If so your Grace would honour me.

When as the day appointed was,  
Whefore the King did thither passe,  
The Earle beforehand did prepare,  
The Kings comming to declare:

And with a countenance passing grim,  
He cal'd his Lady vnto him.  
Saying with sad and heauy cheare,  
I pray you when the King comes here,

Sweet Lady as you tender me,  
Let your attire but homely be:  
Nor wash not thou thy Angels face,  
But doe thy beauty quite disgrace.

Thereto thy gesture so apply,  
It may seeme lothsome to the eye.  
For if the King should there behold  
Thy glorious beauty so extold:

Then should my life soone shortned be,  
For my deserts and trechery.  
When to thy Father first I came,  
Though I did not declare the same,

Yet was I put in trust to bring  
The ioyfull tyding from the King,  
Who for thy glorious beauty seene,  
Did thinke of thee to make his Queene:

But when I had thy person found,  
Thy beauty gaue me such a wound,  
No rest nor comfort could I take,  
Till you, sweet loue, my grieue did slake:

And thus, though duty charged me,  
Most faithfull to my Lord to be:  
Yet loue vpon the other side,  
Bade for my self I should prouide:

Then for my suit and seruice showne,  
At length I won you for my owne,  
And for your loue and wedlocke spent,  
Your choise you need no whit repent.

Then sith my grieue I haue exprest,  
Sweet Lady, grant me my request.  
Good words she gaue with smiling  
cheere,  
Musing at that which she did heare;

And casting many things in mind,  
Great fault herewith she seem'd to find:  
But in her selfe she thought it shame,  
To make that soul which God did frame,

Most costly robes and rich therefore,  
In brauest sort that day she wore:  
Doing all things that ere she might,  
To set her beauty forth to sight.

And her best skill in euery thing  
She shewed to entertaine the King.  
Whereby the King so snared was,  
That reason quite from him did passe:

His heart by her was set on fire,  
He had to her a great desire,  
And for the lookes he gaue her then,  
For euery looke she lent him ten:

Wherefore the King perceiued plaine,  
His loue and lookes were not in vaine.  
Vpon a time it chanced so,  
The King he would a hunting goe,

And as they through a wood did ride,  
The Earle on horseback by his side:  
For so the story telleth plaine,  
That with a shaft the Earle was slaine.

So when that he had lost his life,  
He tooke the Damsell vnto wife,  
Who married her, all shame to shunne,  
By whom he did beget a sonne.

Thus he that did the King deceiue,  
Did by desert this death receiue.  
Then to conclude and make an end,  
Be true and faithful to thy friend.

FINIS.

On the dating of The Three Ravens:

If "The Old Ancient Sort" is indeed "The Three Ravens", as the above 1592-3 source says, then "The Three Ravens" with great probability far predates its inclusion in the Melismata collection in 1611. (seen below) The exquisitely similar rhythm and rhyming schemes of the two lyric sets would seem to support this view.

**COVNTRY PASTIMES.**

Treble. 2/4. 4. Voc.

Here were three Ravens fat on a tree, Downe a downe, hey downe, hey  
downe. These were three Ravens fat on a tree, with a downe. There were three  
Ravens fat on a tree, they were as blacke as they might be, with a downe derrie,  
derrie, derrie, downe, downe.

*The one of them said to his mate,  
downe adowne hey downe,  
2 The one of them said to his mate,  
with adowne:  
The one of them said to his mate  
Where shall we our breakefast take?  
with adowne dery downe.  
Downe in yonder greene field,  
downe adowne hey downe,  
Downe in yonder greene field,  
with adowne.  
Downe in yonder greene field  
There lies a Knight slayn under his shield,  
with a downe.  
His hounds they lie downe at his feete,  
downe adowne hey downe.  
4 His hounds they lie downe at his feete,  
with adowne.  
His hounds they lie downe at his feete*

*So well they can their Master keepe,  
with adowne.  
His Hawkes they flie so eagerly  
downe adowne.  
5 His Hawkes they flie so eagerly  
with adowne.  
His Hawkes they flie so eagerly,  
There's no foule dare him come nee,  
with a downe.  
Downe there comes a fallow Doe,  
downe adowne.  
6 Downe there comes a fallow Doe  
with a downe.  
Downe there comes a fallow Doe.  
As great with song as she might get.  
with adowne.  
She lift up her bloody head,  
downe adowne.  
7 She lift up her bloody head,  
with*

**COVNTRY PASTIMES.**

MEDYS. 4. VOC.

Downe a downe, hey downe, with a downe  
with a downe, hey derrie derrie, downe, downe, downe.

TENOR. 4. VOC.

Downe hey downe, hey downe, hey downe. with a  
downe, with a downe derrie, derrie downe a downe,

BASSES. 4. VOC.

Downe hey downe, hey downe, with a downe,  
with hey downe downe, derrie downe downe.

*with a downe.  
She lift up her bloody head,  
And kiss his wounds that were so red  
with a downe.  
8 She got him up upon her backe,  
downe adowne.  
She got him up upon her backe,  
with adowne.  
She got him up upon her backe,  
And carried him to a carten lake,  
with adowne downe.  
9 She buried him before the prime,  
downe adowne.  
She buried him before the prime,  
with adowne.  
She buried him before the prime,  
She was dead her sifter ere even-song time  
with adowne.  
10 God send every gentleman  
downe adowne.  
God send every gentleman  
with adowne.  
God send every gentleman (man,  
Such hawkes, such hounds, and such a Le-  
with adowne. E*

The old four part version of this piece is one of the most mis-transcribed pieces of music out there. I won't say I haven't added to the problem, but I will say that I've made it as close to the old version and I could keep it. With some of the sharps marked too far from where they are intended to be, it sometimes is hard to make the music work properly, and the lower parts definitely need to have the lyrics reworked a bit to stand. These difficulties have prevented this piece from being properly performed as a four part piece in most cases, since a mistranscription sounds terrible. The more intricate chording of the old version sounds more in the style of the original period, although the modern version plays easier.

Here's the way three ravens is normally chorded today...

### The Three Ravens

Em D  
There were three rauens sat on a tree  
Em G B7  
Downe a downe, hay downe, hay downe  
Em D  
There were three rauens sat on a tree  
G B7  
With a downe  
G D  
There were three rauens sat on a tree  
Em B7  
They were as black as they might be  
G D B7 Em  
With a downe derrie derrie derrie downe downe

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 2. The one of them said to his mate,<br>"Where shall we our breakefast take?"         | 7. She lift vp his bloody hed,<br>And kist his wounds that were so red.             |
| 3. "Downe in yonder greene field,<br>There lies a knight slain vnder his shield       | 8. She got him vp vpon her backe,<br>And carried him to earthen lake.               |
| 4. "His hounds they lie downe at his<br>feete,<br>So well they can their master keep. | 9. She buried him before the prime,<br>She was dead herselfe ere euen-song<br>time. |
| 5. "His haukes they flie so eagerly,<br>There's no fowle dare him come nie."          | 10. God send euery gentleman,<br>Such haukes, such hounds, and such a<br>leman.     |
| 6. Downe there comes a fallow doe,<br>As great with yong as she might goe.            | Finis   |

### Or this Alternative Key:

Am G Am C E7  
Am G C E7  
C G Am E7  
C G E7 Am

Here's my version of the old four part tune:

## Three Ravens Four Part

Ravenscroft

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with four staves labeled Tenor 1, Tenor 2, Bass 1, and Bass 2. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The first system includes chord symbols: Am G C, G C E, Am F C, and E. The second system includes chord symbols: Am G C, G C G C G E, C, G, and Am. The third system is marked with a '2' and includes chord symbols: E, C, G, E, and A. The notation includes various note values, rests, and phrasing slurs.

Here's the solo version with the same chording:

## Three Ravens (Solo)

Arr. by C. A. Powers

Voice

Am G C G C E Am F C E

Am G C F G C G C G E C G Am

E C G E A