Mary, Vessel of Holiness

Solo Voice and Accompaniment
Christmastide

When I first heard this Scottish song, not knowing Scots Gaelic, the strong rhythms in triple meter struck me as those of a sea chantey (think of “A-way to the south’ard we go”). At the same time the gentle rocking of the phrases suggested a lullaby. Marian agreed to match this melody with a lullaby for Mary incorporating imagery of the sea.

Much later I discovered that the song’s original words express longing for home, that its imagery is of mountains and meadows, and that the song was written in 1856 by Iain Camshroin of Ballachulish in the Scottish Highlands.

Albert Blackwell
January 4, 2012
Mary, Vessel of Holiness

Marian Willard Blackwell

Iain Camshroin, 1856*
Arr. Albert Blackwell

1. Mary, vessel of holiness, Mary, beacon of hopefulness,

Mary, haven of humbleness, mothering Jesus our Savior.

*Chi mi na morbheanna

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2. Rock him in the bow of the covenant, steady him on the keel of the reverent,

swell his soul from the depths to the firmament, fix him on God and his neighbor.
3. Mary, vessel of holiness, Mary, beacon of hope-fulness

Mary, haven of humble-ness, mothering Jesus our Sav-ior.
4. Stay him while the storm clouds are hovering, brace him when the gale winds are stiffening,

sooth him with a song for the suffering, steer him to heav'n's safe harbor.
5. Mary, vessel of holiness, Mary, beacon of hopefulness,

Mary, haven of humbleness, mothering Jesus our Savior.