Rock and Pickle Tow

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There was an auld wife had a wee pickle tow,
An' she was to try the spinnin' o't;
But the rock an' the tow flew up in a lowe,
An' that was a weary beginnin' o't.

MacLennan SNR (1909), 21. To this tune goes "There was a wee wifie row't up in a blanket", q.v.

This is a version of the first stanza of a song by Alex. Ross (1699-1784); in Herd (1776), II.92, and many other anthologies, including SMM V (1796), 450 (439), with music. There the words are: "There was an auld wife had a wee pickle tow,/ And she wad gae try the spinning o't,/ But looten her down, her rock took a low,/ And that was an ill beginning o't." The tune first appears as A Scotish March in Playford's Musick's Hand-Maid, 1663; later in his Musick's Recreation (1669), as Montrose's March. In Oswald's Curious Coll. (1739), 16-17, as A Rock and a wi Pickle Tow, and before this (Rock and a wi Pickle-Tow) in Mitchell's Highland Fair (1731), 57 (XXXVII). It has been used for many songs, including a rewrite by Joanna Baillie ("A lively young lass had a wee pickle tow" etc.); and Lady Nairne's "Jamie the Laird."

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