THE FOLKSONGS OF BRITAIN

Volume II

Songs of Seduction

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Introduction

The hero of this collection is the randy, roving blade and the heroine is the lonely and complaisant housewife or dairy maid. Whether tinker, cobbler, soldier or sailor, the rambler's life lends him glamor and the farmer's wife, weary of her isolated cottage, yields readily to his advances. There is no indirection or flirtation in these affairs, nor does any sense of wrongdoing or shame stain these tales. They are a "Decameron" without the intrigue and with very little cynicism, a collection of "Droll Stories" stripped of all pretentiousness. In them love is taken lightly, it is enjoyed, often it is laughed at and it is soon forgotten. If the girl has a baby, she suffers neither self-reproach nor social ostracism. If the lad suffers injury in the battle of love, he is soon put to rights and goes cruising again.

These lusty songs show a survival of Old European, pre-Christian attitudes about love – a gay and permissive spirit which Chaucer expressed, which the Elizabethans enjoyed and which since then, gradually sunk below the surface. There is little doubt, however, that this pagan spirit lingered on in the country lanes of Great Britain, long after the Puritans had driven it underground in the cities. Probably the best-known folk song in Great Britain is the story of the amorous encounter between a seventeen-year-old girl and a soldier (see Side B, No. 2). There are a number of songs which take the good, old North European custom of bundling for granted *(Blow the Candle Out)*, and from the Orkneys we hear the voice of a respectable farmer telling proudly how everyone bundled when he was in his courting days.

The ribald tradition is particularly important among the Scots. Their Gaelic-speaking ancestors had songs which referred to the act of love in language as poetic and unabashed as was used to describe any other natural thing. When Calvinism brought a sense of sin, the folk poets of Scotland took the counter-offensive by rhyming together an endless literature of ribaldry. There is hardly a Scots reel that does not suggest a sexy poem to the sons of Dundee and Aberdeen. Burns knew and loved these sexy diddling pieces and often used them as the basis for his best songs. Wales once had a rich tradition of this sort, but it has dropped almost out of sight under the weight of Methodism. Irish language singers are perfectly natural about sex, often using it as a subject of satire. Curiously enough, there is little in the Anglo-Irish folk song tradition of this sort, at least that the respectable Irishman will recognize.

Now let these country singers have their merry way with you. They were recorded at pubs, in the family kitchen, at tinker campfires, in the fields, singing without embarrassment before mixed audiences. Note: Due to lack of space, the recorded versions have been cut; omitted stanzas appear in italics.

Note: For reasons of space it was not possible to reproduce all the stanzas of each song on the disc. However, all stanzas are given in the text; those omitted from the recording appear in italics.

1. *THE NUTTING GIRL*, sung by Cyril Poacher with chorus and melodeon, The Ship Inn, Blaxhall, Woodbridge, Suffolk; collected by Peter Kennedy and Alan Lomax.

The susceptible young lady of this nineteenth century broadside ballad is hardly unique in history. In Italy, where chestnuts are a main crop, the songs of the chestnut harvest paint a picture of a wanton, fall saturnalia. But perhaps no chestnut song can match the madcap delight of this frolicking ballad and its abandoned refrain.

The tune often occurs as a Morris dance and as a country dance, also in the Devonshire ballad called *Jack of all Trades*, in *Calder Fair* and in Samuel Lover's famous *Low-backed Car*. Lover took the tune from Bunting, who recorded it from an Irish harper in 1792. The text was familiar to broadside printers, but Cyril Poacher has improved it.

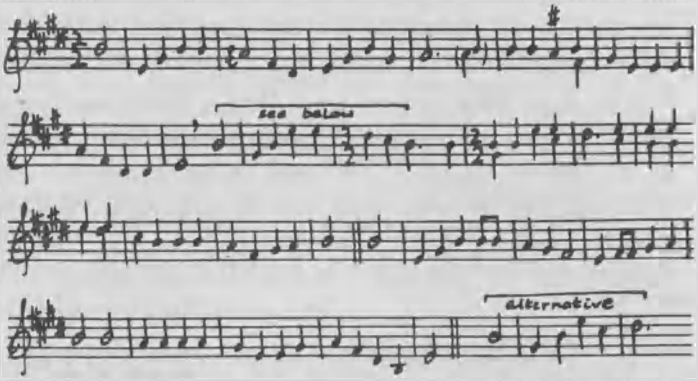
References:

Titled in GUIDE: NUTTING TIME. Also called A-NUTTING WE WILL GO. Baring-Gould: Songs of the West (words "toned down for polite ears.") Moeran: Six Suffolk Folk Songs: FSJ 3 p.127 (collected by Merrick, Sussex.)

CHAIRMAN: Order, please, ladies and gentlemen. I have much pleasure in calling on my old friend Mr. C.P. to oblige with Nuttin'.....

1) Now come all you jovial fellows, come listen to my song,
It is a little ditty and it won't contain you long.
It's of a fair young damsel, she lived down in Kent,
Arose one summer's mornin', she a-nuttin' went.

Chorus:
With my fal-lal to my ral-tal-lal,
Sing whack fol the dear-ol-day,
And what few nuts that poor girl had
She threw them all away.*
**(Also sung: "Strew")*



2) It's of a brisk young farmer was ploughing of his land
(OF HIS LAND)
He called unto his horses to bid them gently stand;
As he sit down upon his plough all for a song to sing,
(TO SING)
His voice was so melodious it made the valleys ring.
(Cho.)

3) It's of this fair young damsel was nuttin' in a wood
(IN THE WOOD)
His voice was so melodious it charmed her as she stood.
She could no longer stay,
And what few nuts she had poor girl she threw them all away.

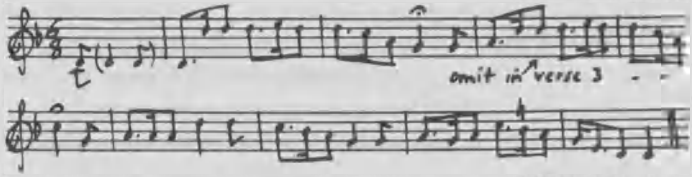
4) She then came to young Johnny as he sit on his plough (ON HIS PLOUGH)
She said, "Young man I really feel I cannot tell you how."
He took her to some shady broom, and there he laid her down,
Says she, "Young man, I think I feel the world go round and round."

5) Now come all you young women, this warning by me take, (BY ME TAKE)
If you should a-nutting go, please get home in time, (IN TIME)
For if you should stay too late, (TOO LATE) to hear the ploughboy sing,
You might have a young farmer to nurse up in the spring. (Cho.)

2. *THE BONNIE WEE LASSIE WHO NEVER SAID NO,* sung by Jeannie Robertson, Aberdeen, Scotland; recorded by Alan Lomax.

Bawdy ballads are rare in Ireland, common in England and universal in the English-speaking parts of Scotland, where the rigors of Calvinism seem to have had no effect upon an old, pagan tradition. The "blue" songs of Scotland are seldom "dirty" or unpleasant. They take a frank delight in sex, attach no penalty to it nor do they condemn the maid when, nine months later, her belly grows heavy and round.

Burns loved to sing these ribald ditties and used many of them as the basis of his world-famous songs such as *Comin' Through the Rye.* Later he published the unexpurgated texts in the "Merry Wives of Caledonia," in which this ditty, one of the many about tavern wenches, might well have been included.



1) I come to a cross and I met a wee lass,
Says I "My wee lassie are you willin' to go?"
Take share o' a gill," she said, "Sir, I will,
For I'm the wee lassie 'at never said no."

2) It's into an alehouse we merrily did go,
And we never did rise 'till the cock it did crow;
And it's glass after glass we merrily did toast
To the bonnie wee lassie who never said no.

3) *(This bonnie wee lassie she being slow in drink)*
The landlady opened the door and come in with a smile;
She lifted a chair with freedom and air,
"Here's health to the lass who can jig it in style."

4) *"O bring us some liquor," the lassie she cried,*
"To cheer up his spirits, I doubt they are low.
For it's not what you do, bring a bottle or two
To the bonnie wee lassie who never said no."

5) *The drinks she took in being the best of the gin;*
Me being myself and sober to be,
For it's glass after glass so merry did toast
Till the lass and the landlady found themsel' fu'.

6) "Look into my pocket," the lassie she said,
"There are two and six to pay for your bed;
And for laying me down, you owe me a crown,
Look into my pocket," the lassie she said.

7) I put my hand in her pocket and five poond I took,
Says I to mysel': I will bundle and go.
And I bade her goodbye, but she made no reply,
This bonnie wee lassie who never said no.

8) So I rambled awa' by the brimbles o' Clee,
And four or five comrades I chanced for to meet,
I told what I done and I laughed at the fun,
But I scarcely could tell them what I had been through!

3. *BUNDLE AND GO*, played on the fiddle by John Doherty, a pedlar of Donegal, Ireland; recorded by Peter Kennedy.

An instrumental variant of the air of the previous song.

When a lass decided to "bundle and go," she rolled up her personal belongings and her bedclothes and left home with her young man.

If I would just go without telling my father,
Perhaps he would keep sheets and blankets also;
My mother would rage and forever disown me,
Yet fain, very fain, would I bundle and go.

4. *BLOW THE CANDLE OUT*, sung by Jimmy Gilhaney, a tinker of Belfast, Northern Ireland; recorded by Peter Kennedy in the Orkney Isles.

It is a sign of these times, certainly, that 1960 sees the first unbowdlerized printing of this, one of the finest love songs in the English language (Lomax: "The Folk Songs of North America," Cassell, 1960). Certainly collectors have encountered it frequently, for it is widely known in Great Britain and, to a lesser extent, in America. The story tells of a young apprentice, or recruit, bundling with his sweetheart for the last time before an extended absence.

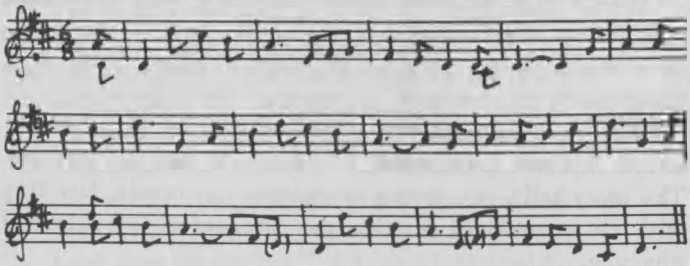
Ord, in Bothy Songs and Ballads," page 95, prints one charming stanza from a broadside source not known in the South:

My bosom is on fire, love,
The more I gaze on thee,
And as I wander lower,
I am no longer free;
And while I gaze, your rosy lips
Do sweetly seem to pout,
So hasten to my arms, love,
And blow the candle out.

In most versions the young man advises his sweetheart what to do when their baby is born, but only in this Dublin broadside is America mentioned as a way out for this poor, but loving, couple.

Now my babe is born
I will pay the nurse her fee,
I will dress myself in velvet
And America I'll see.
I will not leave the room I'm in
Nor will I go out
I will get another young man
To blow the candle out.

The 6/8 tune signature is somewhat arbitrary, for the Irish tinker, like other traditional singers, often breaks into even time.



1) There was a young apprentice who went to meet his dear;
The moon was shinin' brightly and the stars were viewin' clear,
He went to his love's window and he called her by her name,
Then soon she rose and let him in, went back to bed again.

2) Sayin', "Willie, dearest Willie, tonight will be your doom.
Strip off into your nightshirt and bear one night within.
The streets they are too lonely for you to walk about,
So come roll me in your arms, love, and we'll blow the candle out.

3) "My father and my mother, next bedroom they do lie,
Kissing and embracin', and why not you and I?
Kissing and embracin' without a fear or doubt,
So come roll me in your arms, love, and we'll blow the candle out."

4) It was six months and after six, six months ago today,
He wrote to me a letter saying he was far away;
He wrote to me a letter without a fear or doubt,
And he never said when he'd come back to blow the candle out.

5) Come all you gallant highway girls pay heed to what I say,
Never court a young man that ploughs the angry sea;
For some day or another when walking out about,
He will do to you as he done to me when he blew the candle out.

5. *THE FOGGY DEW*, sung by Phil Hammond, Holt, Norfolk, England; recorded by Peter Kennedy.

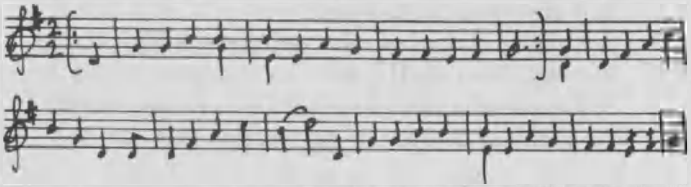
The Foggy Dew, an even finer and older piece than *Blow the Candle Out*, did not come into popular circulation until it was bowdlerized by Carl Sandburg and put into a coy gramophone performance by Benjamin Britten. Since then, the song has been much discussed and sung, with a full one-hour broadcast on BBC's Third Program, marking a climax of interest.

A number of theories about the meaning of *The Foggy Dew* have been offered. James Reeves points out that "foggy" in Middle English is a course, rank marsh grass and thus may stand for maidenhead, while "dew" probably represents virginity or chastity. It is perhaps more likely that the song had an Anglo-Irish origin and that "foggy dew" is an Englishman's attempt to pronounce the Irish "orocedhu," which means "dark," or "black night." Young ladies notoriously like to be protected from the terrors of the dark. Robert Graves, however, carries this "orocedhu" idea a step further with the suggestion that the verse has a double meaning, standing first for the black pestilence (which may have been abroad at the time of the song's composition) and second for the black habit worn by nuns. The girl, in such a case, may be a nun asking for sanctuary from a nunnery!

This text, perhaps the fullest and most rational yet discovered, came from a Norfolk tree-feller. Phil Hammond, who has specialized all his life in the dialect of Norfolk, could not remember the woodsman's tune and so used the popular one. The normal melody in East Anglia, however, is *Ye Banks and Braes of Bonnie Doon.* This air may have been attached first to *The Foggy Dew* and put into circulation again by Burns.

References:

Bunting: Ancient Music of Ireland, tune only; Stanford: Songs of Old Ireland (Bunting tune with new words by A. P. Graves); Kidson: Traditional Tunes (one verse only); Joyce: Old Irish Folk Music (one verse); Sharp: Folk Songs from Somerset (3 verses re-written); FSJ 3 p. 134 (one verse collected by Merrick in Sussex); FSJ 13, p. 295 (tune only collected by Vaughan-Williams in Hampshire); Reeves: The Idiom of the People (composite version text from four collected by Cecil Sharp in Somerset; the song is considered in detail pp. 45-57). American version collected Sharp, published in English Folk Songs of the Southern Appalachians Vol II, p. 174 (7 verses, Virginia); Randolph, I., p. 394.



1) O I am a bachelor and I live alone,
And I work in the weaver's trade;
And the only only thing that I ever done wrong,
Was courtin' a fair young maid.
I courted her one summer time
And all the winter, too,
And the only only thing that I never should 'ave done,
Was to save her from the foggy, foggy dew.

2) I got that tired a living alone,
I says to her one day;
I've a nice little crib in my old shack
Where you might safely lay;
You'll be all right in the summer time

And in the winter, too,
And you'll lay right warm and take no harm,
Away from the foggy, foggy dew.

3) I don't think much o' this old shack
And I shall lonely be;
With only that poor old Cyprus cat
To keep me company.
There's a cricket singing on the hearth,
And what can that thing do
If the night turn raw and the fire won't draw
To save me from the foggy, foggy dew.

4) One night she come to my bedside
Time I laid fast asleep,
She puts her head down on my bed
And she starts in to weep;
She yelled and cried, she well near died,
She say, What shall I do?
So I hauled her into bed and I covered up her head
To save her from the foggy, foggy dew.

5) Says I, my dear, lay close to me
And wipe away them tears
Then I hauled her shift up over her head
And I wrapped it 'round her ears.
We was all right in the winter time
And in the summer, too;
And I held her tight that live-long night
To save her from the foggy, foggy dew.

6) Now lay you still, you silly young fool
And don't you feel afraid.
For if you want to work with me
You got to learn your trade.
I learned her all that summer time
And all the winter, too,

And truth to tell she learned that well;
She saved us from the foggy, foggy dew.

7) One night I laid there good as gold
And then she say to me,
I got a pain without my back
Where no pain ought to be.
I was all right in the summer time,
And in the winter, too,
But I've took some ill or a kind of a chill
From laying in the foggy, foggy dew.

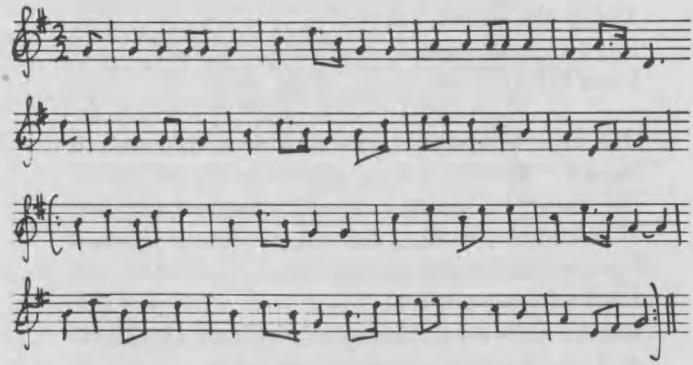
8) One night she start to moan and cry
Says I, "What's up with you?"
She say, "I never should've been this way
If that hadn't've been for you."
I got my boots and trousers on,
I got my neighbor too,
But do what we would, we couldn't do no good,
And she died in the foggy, foggy dew.

9) So I am a bachelor, I live with my son
And we work in the weavin' trade;
And every time I look in his face I can see
The eyes of that fair young maid;
It remind me of the summer time,
And of the winter, too,
And the many, many nights she laid in my arms,
To save her from the foggy, foggy dew.

6. *TOORNA MA GOON*, sung by Jimmy McBeath, Elgin, Moray, Scotland; recorded by Alan Lomax.

Among the most delightful things in Scots folk music

are the diddling songs, strings of syllables set to dance airs and often sung for dancing when no instrumentalist was present. Often these songs are quite bawdy. Jimmy McBeath says about this example, "It's a kids' song. A boy and a girl started fighting and he tore the gown off her back. She went home and told her mother that it had been ripped, torn and tattered by an ill-trickered loon."



It's toorna-, rip-ped-a, toorn-a my goon-o,
Toorn-a-rip-ped-a, toorn-a my goon-o;
Toorn-a-rip-ped-a, toorn-a my goon-o,
Did ye ever see such an ill-trickered loon?

Repeat 3 times

6-A. *ROLLING IN THE RYEGRASS*, played on the flute by Paddy Taylor, Limerick Ireland; recorded by Peter Kennedy.

This instrumental version of *Toorna Ma Goon* is also well-known in Ireland as a reel. Here it is performed by one of the best exponents for traditional flute. Irish country flautists aim at making their instruments produce as

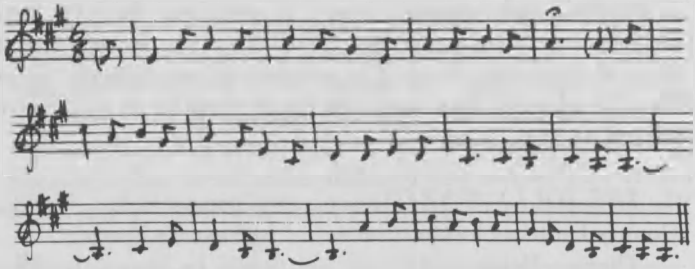
"breathy" and coarse a sound as possible. In fact, they deliberately avoid any purity of tone which will cause loss of rhythmic effect. The subtlety of appogiatura notes used in playing fast dance music is sometimes not appreciated at first listening.

7. *THE JOLLY TINKER*, sung by Thomas Moran, Mohill, County Leitrim, Ireland; recorded by Seamus Ennis.

Thomas Moran, a 79 year old farmer in central Ireland, was found by Seamus Ennis to have in his memory an extraordinary collection of ancient ballads. Seamus asked him if he picked up these songs in his travels. "No," said Moran, "I learned them from a neighbor who never crossed a cow track, much less a road, in all of his life." For his ballad performances, see the two albums of Narrative Songs. Here he sings one of the many bawdy ballads dealing with the amorous adventures of wandering tinkers.

Tinsmithing is an old gypsy trade, which was once regarded with considerable awe by simple country people. The tinker, too, was a traveled, sophisticated bachelor, likely to turn up at lonely, country cottages when the husband was away from home. Furnished thus with opportunities, experience and legend, he naturally enough became a favorite hero of ribald songs, the best known of which is the classic about O'Reilly's exploits.

1) As I went down a shady lane at a door I chanced to knock,
The servant she came to the door and axed me could I stop,
Or could I mend a rusty hole that never had a drop?
Well, indeed I can, don't you know I can.
To me right-fol-looral-laddy
Well, indeed I can.



2) She brought me through the kitchen and she brought me through the hall,
And the servants cried: The Devil, are you going to block us all
Well, indeed I'm not, don't you know I'm not,
To me right-fol-looral-laddy
Well, indeed I'm not.

3) She brought me up the stairs for to show me what to do,
She fell on the feather bed and I fell on it, too,
Well, indeed I did, don't you know I did...

4) She took up the frying pan and she began to knock,
O then for to let the servants know that I was at me work.
Well, indeed I was, don't you know I was...

5) She put her hand into her pocket and she pulled out fifty pound,
Sayin' Take this, me jolly tinker, and we'll have another round.
Well, indeed I will, don't you know I will...

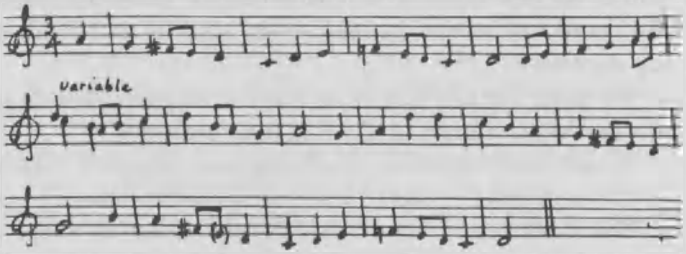
6) She put her hand into her pocket and she pulled out her gold watch,
Saying, Take this, me jolly tinker, for I know you are no botch,
Well, indeed I'm not, don't you know I'm not...

7) Now I'm a jolly tinker this forty years or more,
And such a rusty hole as that I never blocked before.
Well, indeed I didn't, don't you know I didn't...

8. *LONG PEGGIN' AWL*, sung by Harry Cox, Yarmouth, Norfolk, England; recorded by Peter Kennedy.

Harry Cox, a farm laborer from the flat country of Norfolk, is certainly the most remarkable ballad informant found in the British Isles in this generation. He has furnished fine texts and tunes for more than two hundred folk songs, including many Child ballads, and his repertoire of sexualia is extraordinary. Here he sings, in the classic fashion of the Norfolk balladeer, one of the many ballads concerning the amorous adventures of cobblers and the sexual symbolism of their tools.

America has a melancholy variant entirely dealing with problems brought on by the industrial revolution (see Lomax: Folk Songs of North America, page 283). The tune exhibits with particular clarity a melodic characteristic found in many British traditional songs – the uncertain major or minor due to the variant mediant, or third, of the mode, in this case the note F.



1) As I was a-walking one morning in May,
I met a pretty fair maid her gown it-a was gay;
I step-ped up to her and back she did fall,
She want to be played with the long peggin' awl.

2) *I said, "Pretty fair maid, will you travel with me*
Unto foreign countries strange things for to see.
And I will protect you whate'er may befall,
And follow your love with his long peggin' awl."
3) Then home to her parents she then went straightway,
And unto her mother these words she did say,
"I'll follow my true love, whate'er may befall,
I'll follow my love with his long peggin' awl."
4) "O daughter, o daughter, how can you say so?
For young men are false, you very well know.
They'll tell you fine things and the devil and all,
And leave you big-bellied with the long peggin' awl."
5) "O mother, o mother, now do not say so,
Before you were sixteen you very well know,
There was father and mother and baby and all,
You followed my dad for his long peggin' awl.

9. *THE THRASHING MACHINE*, sung by Anne O'Neill, a tinker of Belfast, Northern Ireland; recorded by Peter Kennedy.

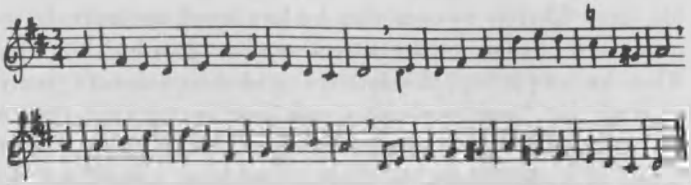
A more modern instance of the technological sex symbolism is this common broadside ballad which compares the act of love to the working of the new-fangled "thrashing machine."

We shall let the fourteenth edition of the "Encyclopedia Britanica" aproximately date this song:

> A workable threshing machine was invented late in the eighteenth century and was gradually coming into use early in the nineteenth; it was driven by water or wind power, sometimes by horse labour, and later by steam. But it was not until the '30's of the 19th century that steam began to be applied at all extensively to agriculture.
>
> The melody, known in America as *Sweet Betsy from*

Pike and in England as *Villikins and his Dinah*, has been set to many songs in many forms. When sung to slow, lyrical pieces, it becomes a tune of very great beauty, indeed. The Irish tinker-singer makes use of a feature unusual in English folk song by introducing "creeping chromaticism" in the last phrase of the tune (see also *The Two Brothers*, Vol. III, Side B, No. 2 in this set).

References: Sharp collected two versions. See Reeves: The Idiom of the People, p. 206.



1) For there was an old farmer in Down he did dwell,
He'd one pretty servant, her name it was Nell,
He'd one pretty servant she was scarce seventeen,
And he showed her the works of his thrashing machine.

2) Says Nell to the farmer it's a fine summer's day,
While the rest of the farmers are off making hay,
Come into the barn where we won't be seen,
And the two of us start working our thrashing machine.

3) O Nell she stepped forward and into the house,
The boss got the harness and strapped her right on;
Nell took the handle and turned on the steam,
And the two of them start working their thrashing machine.

4) O six months being over and nine coming on,
Nell's skirt wouldn't meet nor her drawers wouldn't go on;
It's under her oxter like a young fairy queen,
I will have you transported for your thrashing machine.

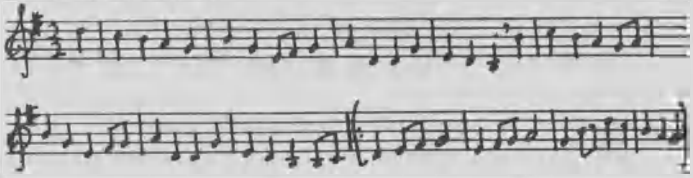
5) O up comes the Judge with a pen in his claw,
He says, "Lovely Nell, you have broken the law."
"No, sir," says she, "It's plain to be seen,
I needed the strength of his thrashing machine."

10. *THE RIGS OF LONDON TOWN,* sung by Charlie Wills, near Bridport, Dorset, England; recorded by Peter Kennedy.

Charlie Wills is the apotheosis of the jovial, country Englishman. He steps straight out of the pages of Thomas Hardy with a cider mug in one hand and a lusty ballad on his lips. Charlie swears that he has lived exclusively on cider and cheese for the last sixty-five years of his life. When he was a boy, the farmers paid their laborers partly in cash, but largely in cider, and Charlie acquired a taste for the drink which eliminated his interest in all other forms of nourishment. In fact he seems to have found in cider the elixir of eternal youth, for at eighty-odd, he is merry, rosy-cheeked, in love with all pretty women, and has a wit as sharp and tangy as a fall apple. Here he sings a nineteenth century broadside ballad recounting the triumph of a country lad over all the sharpers of wicked, old London Town.

References:

FSJ 28 p. 161 (Tune only collected in the Isle of Man). FSJ 35 p. 272 (collected from Harry Cox by E. J. Moeran). Sharp noted four versions of the tune and two texts, see Reeves: Idiom of the People p. 180. Version sung by Thomas Moran using "The Rose Tree" tune was recorded by Seamus Ennis.



1) Up London City I took my way,
It was up Cheapside I chanced to stray,
When a fair pretty girl there I did meet
And with kisses her then I did greet,

Chorus:
For I was up to the rigs,
Down to the jigs,
Up to the rigs of London town.

2) She took me to some house of frame,
And boldly she did enter in;
Loudly for supper she did call,
Thinking I was going to pay for it all.

3) The supper o'er, the table cleared,
The waiter brought white wine and red,
The waiter brought white wine and red
While the chamber-maid prepared the bed.

4) *Between the hours of one and two*
She asked me if to bed I'd go;
Immediately I did consent
And along with this pretty girl I went.

5) Her cheeks was white and her lips was red,
And I kissed her as she laid in bed;
But soon as I found she was fast asleep,
Out of the bed then I did creep.

6) I searched her pockets and there I found
A silver snuff box and ten pound;
A gold watch and a diamond ring,
I took the lot and I locked my lady in.

7) Now all young men wherever you be
If you meet a pretty girl you use her free;
You use her free but don't get drunk,
But remember me when I was up Cheapside.

11. *THE WIND BLEW THE BONNIE LASSIE'S PLAIDIE AWA'*, sung by Jimmy McBeath, Elgin, Moray, Scotland; recorded by Alan Lomax. Played on the bagpipe chanter by Duncan Burke, Perth, Scotland; then sung by Jeannie Robertson, Aberdeen, Scotland; recorded by Peter Kennedy.

It is impossible to say whether the tune or the text has played the most important role in the origin, rise and spread of this song. Its catchy, Scots air occurs in a wide variety of settings, among them the Scots pipe march *White Cockade*, in America in *The Bird's Courting Song* and *The Lazy Man Who Wouldn't Hoe Corn*, as well as in the Scots-Gaelic song *Oich Agus Oich Mar A Tha Mi An Nochd*, to name only a few.

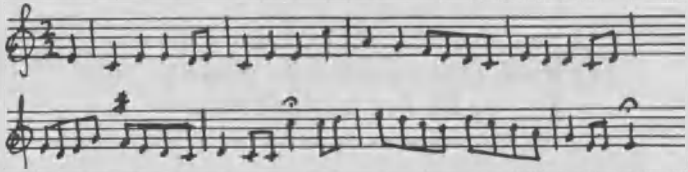
On the other hand, a version of *The Elfin Knight*, published in black letter about 1670, shows that the refrain is old.

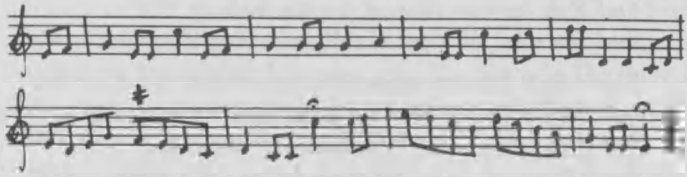
My plaid awa', my plaid awa',
And o'er the hill and far awa',
And far awa' to Norrowa,
My plaid shall not be blown awa'.

References:

Ord: Bothy Songs & Ballads p. 93; Child: English and Scottish Popular Ballads, 2.

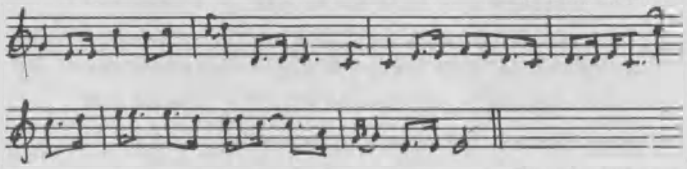
The song as sung by Jimmy McBeath, runs as follows:





1) There was a butcher wha lived in Crieff,
And in come a bonnie lass to buy some beef,
But he took her in his airms, and doon she did fa',
O the wind's blown the bonnie lassie's plaidie awa'.
Chorus:
Her plaidie's awa', it's awa' wi' the wind,
Her plaidie's awa', and it canna be found;
But he took her in his airms, aye, and doon she did fa',
Saying, "I'll pay the plaidie that the wind blew awa'."

The song as sung by Jeannie Robertson, runs as follows:



My plaidie's awa' and awa' wi' the win',
My plaidie's awa' and it cannae be foun',
O what will the old folk, the old folks say ava,
O I canna say the wind blew my plaidie awa'.

In full text, the song runs as follows:
It wasna lang after the plaidie was lost
Till the bonnie lassie grew thick aboot the waist;

And Rab he was blamed for the hale of it a',
And the win' blawin' the bonnie lassie's plaidie awa'.

Then Rab he was summoned to answer the Session,
An' they a' cried out: Ye maun mak' a confession.
But Rab never answered them are word ava
But "The win' blew the bonnie lassie's plaidie awa',"

The aul' wife cam' in poor Rab to accuse,
The ministers an' elders began to abuse;
Poor Rab was trying to mak' ane into twa
But Rab said, "The win' blew the plaidie awa'."

The lassie was sent for to come there hersel',
She looked in his face, says: "Ye ken hoo I fell?
An' ye were the cause o't, ye daurna say na,
For 'twas then that the win' blew my plaidie awa'."

Rab looked in her face and he gied a bit smile,
He says, "Bonnie lassie, I winna you beguile.
The minister he's here, he'll make ane o' us twa,
That will pay for the plaid that the win' blew awa'.

The whiskey was sent for to mak' a' things richt,
The ministers an' elders they sat a' nicht,
They sat an' they sang till the cock he did crow,
"The win' blew the bonnie lassie's plaidie awa'."

Now Rab an' his lassie they are han' in han',
An' they live as contented as ony in the lan',
An' when he gets drunk he minds on the fa',
And he sings, "'Twas the win' blew the bonnie lassie's plaidie awa."

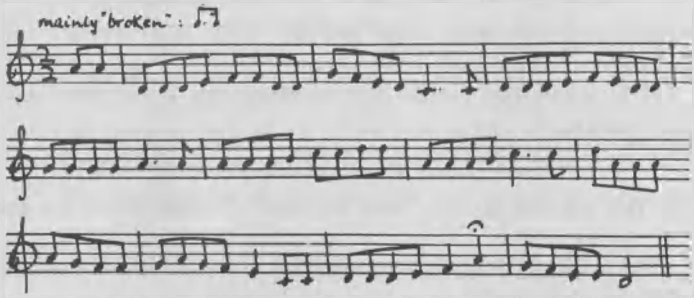
12. *THE CUNNING COBBLER*, sung by George Spicer, Village Inn, "The Cherry Tree," Copthorne, Sussex, England; recorded by Peter Kennedy.

Old George Spicer, despite his drink-worn country

voice, is the heart and soul of all the fun at The Cherry Tree pub in Copthorne. You hear him now quieting his audience by talking his way into his ballad. The tale is the same as that told by Boccaccio and Chaucer, except that here a comic policeman is brought into the cast. Old George takes delightful liberties with a tune much used for late English and pseudo-Irish folk song.

References:

FSJ 8 p. 156 (one verse only collected in Essex by Vaughan Williams) FSJ 13 p. 253 (2 versions with one verse only from Hampshire.) Six versions collected by Cecil Sharp (unpublished) printed on broadsides.



1) (Spoken)
This is just a little story, but the truth I'm going to tell,
(Sung)
It does concern a butcher who in Dover town did dwell;
Now this butcher was possessed of a beautiful wife,
But the cobbler he loved her as dearly as his life.
Singing fol-the-riddle-i-do,
Fol-the-riddle-ay.

2) Now this butcher went to market for to buy an ox,
And then the little cobbler, sly as any fox,
'E put on his Sunday coat and courtin' he did go,
To the jolly butcher's wife because 'e loved her so.

3) Now when the little cobbler stepped into the butcher's shop,
The butcher's wife knew what he meant and bade him for to stop.
O says he, "Me darling, have you got a job for me?"
The butcher's wife so cunning, says, "I'll go up and see."

4) Now she went to the bedroom door and gave the snob a call,
"I have got an easy job if you have brought your awl.
And if you do it workmanlike some cash to you I'll pay."
"O thank you," said the cobbler, and began to stitch away.

5) But as the cobbler was at work a knock come on the door,
The cobbler scrambled out of bed and laid upon the floor;
O said she, "Me darling, what will me husband say?"
But then she let the policeman in along with her to play.

6) But the butcher came from market in the middle of the night,
The policeman scrambled out of bed and soon got out of sight;
The butcher's wife so nimbly locked the bedroom door,
But in her fright she quite forgot the cobbler on the floor.

7) But the butcher soon found out when he laid down in bed,
"Something here is very hard," the butcher smiled and said.
She says, "It is me rolling pin," the butcher he did laugh,
"How came you for to roll your dough with a police-man's staff?"

8) Now the butcher threw the truncheon underneath the bed,
There he cracked the pepper pot and hit the cobbler's head.
The cobbler cried out, "Murder!" Said the butcher "Who are you?"
"I am the little cobbler that goes mending ladies' shoes."

9) *"If you are the little cobbler, come along with me,*
I'll pay you for your mending before I've done with thee."
He put him in the bull-pen, the bull began to roar,
The butcher laughed to see the bull a-roll him o'er and o'er.

10) *Now early in the morning just as people got about,*
The butcher mopped his face with blood, then he turned him out.
He pinned a ticket to his back and on it was the news,
"This cobbler to the bedroom goes mending ladies shoes."

Volume II, SIDE B

1. *DUBLIN CITY*, sung by Seamus Ennis, Dublin, Ireland; recorded by Alan Lomax.

Burl Ives sings another version of this song, which begins:

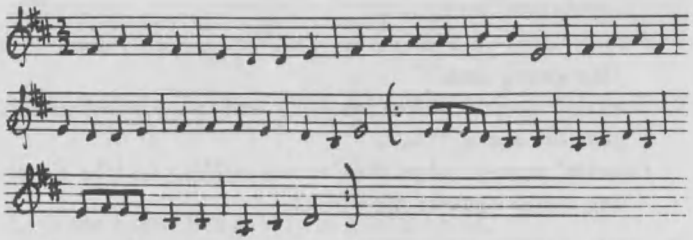
As I walked out in Dublin City
About the hour of twelve at night,
I spied a fair, young maiden
Washing her feet by candlelight.

In the refrain she appears to be counting, but in reverse series running from twenty to nothing and from nineteen to one. If one combines this refrain with the second stanza of the present version, perhaps the song may make sense as a picture of a market girl or a prostitute summing up her day's receipt of coins. On the other hand, perhaps, the first stanza here is another of the many instances in Irish folk song of an encounter with a feminine symbol of the spirit of depressed Ireland – in this case a revolutionary one. Now it appears that Seamus Ennis has collected a version with a number of stanzas linking the song with *No, John, No* or *The Keys of Heaven* (see text). My guess is that these stanzas are an accident and an afterthought, but what the song really concerns, no one can be sure. Perhaps Robert Graves could offer one of his reasonable, supernatural explanations.

References:

Also called THE SPANISH LADY – Irish equivalent of the English song NO JOHN (See Vol. I, Side A: Track 9); KEYS OF HEAVEN (See Reeves: Idiom of the People); the American versions PAPER OF PINS and UH-UH NO.

1) As I walked through Dublin City at the hour of twelve at night,
Who should I see but a maiden beauty combing her hair with a four-pronged pike.
Chorus:
Turry idle-ido-dido-dido,
Turry-idle-ido-dido-day. (2)



2) As I walked again through Dublin on the same or another night,
Who should I see but the same fair maiden counting her cash by the candlelight.

Verses sung by Matt Linehan, Kerry (collected by Seamus Ennis)

3) I says "Fair maid I come you a-courting, your fine features for to win,
If you'll kindly entertain me some dark night I'll call again."

4) She says, "Kind sir, you've come me a-courting, my fine features for to win,
And if I kindly entertain you, you may never call again."

5) She sent me very tight all over, including the crown of my old hat,
I pulled out my "pouse" revolver and let fly a terror shot.

6) When I heard the answer that she made me, I called her a bloody bean,
"Don't you know to whom you're talking? I am Linnehan from Lisheen."

7) "I have gold and I have money, I have cattle and I have land,
I have ships upon the ocean ready to sail at my command."

8) "I don't want your gold or money, I don't want your

cattle and land,
I don't want your ships from the ocean; all I want is a fine young man."

9) *Courtin' women is foolish folly and marryin' women is just the same,*
Courtin' women when they're not willing is like throwing water against the stream.

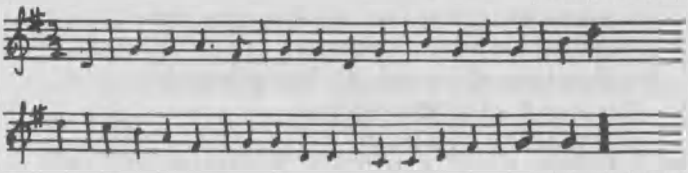
2. *THE LIGHT DRAGOON,* sung by Harry List, Framlingham, Suffolk, England; recorded by Alan Lomax and Peter Kennedy.

The British soldier turned the charming love ballad *As I Roved Out* (see Vol. I, Side B, No. 1) into a plain-speaking and lusty song to suit his own taste. Early English folk song collectors were constantly encountering it and bowdlerizing it. Rev. Baring-Gould was so perturbed to find a young woman playing an aggressive sexual role that he makes the dragoon into the seducer and wrote the following incredible stanza. –

Your distance keep, I esteem you cheap,
'Though your wishes I've granted partly,
But no kisses for me from a chimpanzee,
The lady responded tartly.
Why, a ride dragoon is a mere baboon,
And she boxed his ears full smartly.

References:

Titled THE BOLD DRAGOON in Baring-Gould: Songs of the West (text re-written). Original words published Reeves: The Everlasting Circle p. 57. A distinct song is the ballad called THE LADY & THE DRAGOON (also in Reeves from the Hammond Collection) which is Child No. 7 (Appendix). Related to the last of the "Child" Ballads THE TROOPER LAD (Child 299, Narrative Ballads Vol. II, Side B, Track 12).



1) O the Light Drago'n rode o'er the hill,
The moon was shining brightly,
There was a young lady, for she knew him by his horse,
O because she loved him dearly,
Dearly o dearly,
There was a young lady, for she knew him by his horse,
O because she loved him dearly.

2) She took him by the milk-white reins
She led him to the stable,
There's hay and corn for your horse, young man,
Let him eat while he is able.

3) O she took him by the lily-white hand
She led him to the table,
Here's cakes and wines for you, my dear,
Eat and drink now you are able.

4) O she ran upstairs to make the bed,
O to make it soft and easy,
How nimble she jumped into bed
For to see if it was easy.

5) O the light drago'n he ran upstairs
He put off his army trousers;
How nimble he jumped into bed
For to do what he was able.

6) They laid abed till the clock struck ten,
The trumpets they were a-sounding;
With her spirits high and her belly's low,
And she ran home to her mummy.

7) O where have thou been all this long night?
Enquired her anxious parents,
O I've been along with the Light Drago'n
Because I loved him dearly.
(LOVED HIM DEARLY)

3. *THE ORKNEY STYLE OF COURTSHIP,* from John Findlater, Dounby, Orkney; recorded by Peter Kennedy.

If one drew a map of the sexual mores of Britain, it can be seen that, as one moves north, sexual tensions could tend to disappear and a more permissive attitude toward love-making is found. The old culture of the Orkneys was Scandinavian. There one encounters a survival of the practice of bundling, once was a common cultural trait of northern Europe (where the courting couple needed protection from the night cold) and which spread thence to the northeast of the United States. Here an Orkney ballad singer and small farmer speaks of the custom with the pride of a Texan explaining the origin of the rim-fire saddle.

The Orkney style of courtship, they say it doth appear
To those across the Pentland Firth* so very, very queer.
But let them court the way they choose, either by land or sea,
But a blanket sky and a blanket by, a blanket sky for me.

When I get the old folk off to bed, the peats aboot the fire laid,
I cuddled her in the armchair, and left when morning did appear.

Now if you can in the armchair sit, your girl take on your knee,
If that's the style that you prefer, it matters aught to me.

But I'll strip off me boots and coat and tell you a' you see,
And jump in bed beside the girl – a blanket sky for me.

Well, it was when you were working all day, you had no time; you were working up till late at night, well you had to get somewhere to go and see the girl. If her bedroom was upstairs, well, you just had to shoulder a ladder from the nearest place you could find one and go up to the window and give a few taps, and she would come to the window and open and let you in. And you would talk away to her for an hour or two and then you would drag your way back home again, same as usual

*The Pentland Firth is the dangerous area of sea which separates the Orkney Isles from the North Coast of Scotland.

4. *THE CUCKOO'S NEST* (a) *The Cuckoo's Nest* sung by Jeannie Robertson, Aberdeen, Scotland; recorded by Alan Lomax. (b) *The Cuckoo's Nest* played on the tin whistle by John Maguire, Belfast, Northern Ireland; recorded by Sean O'Boyle and Peter Kennedy. (c) *Twa 'N Twa* sung by John Strachan, Fyvie, Aberdeenshire, Scotland; recorded by Alan Lomax.

This track includes three versions of *The Cuckoo's Nest* plus another diddling piece called *Twa 'N Twa. The Cuckoo's Nest,* known as a reel and hornpipe among the country dancers of the length and breadth of Britain, may once have been a piece of mouth music as brief as *Twa 'N Twa.* Then the snap and sparkle of the verse, combined with its infectiously gay tune, probably led to an expansion of the poem and the delightful song that Jeannie Robertson sings. An even more popular ribald song in

Scotland set to the tune *Castles in the Air* or *Wee Willie Winkle* may have grown in somewhat the same way. Its growth, however, has never ceased, and there are hundreds of much bawdier forms than the following version of *The Ball of Kerriemuir* given me by John Strachan:

O four and twenty merry maids gaed a' to Kerriemuir
But only een come back agin when she was feelin' queer,
At the ball, the ball, a ball aben the brig,
O sic an a carry on got on, it was an awfu' rig.

O some was in the cornyards and others in the sprots,
Ye couldna see the barn frae bottles wantin' corks.
At the ball, the ball, the Ball o' Kerriemuir
There's a lot o' folk agae to it caused an awful stare.

O Geordie had a hump-ed back, he said it gaed him pain,
When his jacket-tail was lifted up oot flew a cock and hen,
At the ball, the ball, he stopped the Corporation,
And the hen come tickerlin' out, that caused a consternation.

O Kirsty Smith was a' dressed up, she'd on her lip a blister,
When she was kissin' Tinker Jock she burst it on his whisker.
At the ball, the ball, O Kirsty couldna smile,
For the split she had upon her lip felt like half a mile.

O Peter Clark with Sailing Jean and sair he tried to coax her,
Fhen they danced the Berlin Reel she slid against his

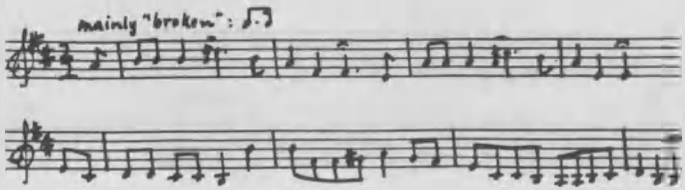
oxter,
At the ball, the ball, he got her hame for keeps,
O but now he rocks the cradle and feeds the nowp wi' neeps.

O the minister's daughter she was there, o she was first of a',
She drink sae muckle whiskey that she couldnae stand the wa'.
At the ball, the ball, to come to the Muir so sweet,
O but when the ball was at its height there's few them left their feet.

O the aul' wife she come wrigglin' ben upon an oxter's staff,
She said she'd dance the Hieland Fling and managed with a chaff,
At the ball, the ball, she houched and danced and swat,
Till the beads o' perforation would have faltered Willie's hairt.

Noo but Jimmy on his stum'er leg flew off upon his castor
He tried to race wi' Hell's Mare and on the brae he passed her,
At the ball, the ball, the ball o' Kerrymuir,
I hope you like that version, the other is owre queer.

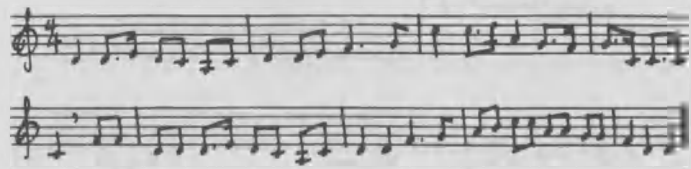
On the disc Jean Robertson sings:



1) There is a thorn bush in oor kell-yard,
   There is a thorn bush in oor kell-yard,
   At the back of thorn bush there stands a lad and lass
   But they're busy, busy hairin' at the cuckoo's nest.
2) It is thorned, it is sprinkled, it is compassed all around,
   It is thorned, it is sprinkled and it isn't easy found.
   She said, "Young man, you're plundering."
   I said it was nae true,
   But I left her with the makin's of a young cuckoo.
3) It's hi the cuckin, ho the cuckin, hi the cuckoo's nest,
   It's hi the cuckin, ho the cuckin, hi the cuckoo's nest.
   I'll gie onybody a shilling and a bottle o' the best
   If they'll ramble up the feathers o' the cuckoo's nest.

J. Maguire then plays tune on his flute and afterwards we have John Strachan:

Some like the lassies that's gay weel dressed,
And some like the lassies that's techt about the waist,
But it's in among the blankets that I like best
To get a jolly rattle at the cuckoo's nest.



And some like the lassies that's techt aboot the waist,
But it's in among the blankets that I like best
To get a jolly rattle at the cuckoo's nest.

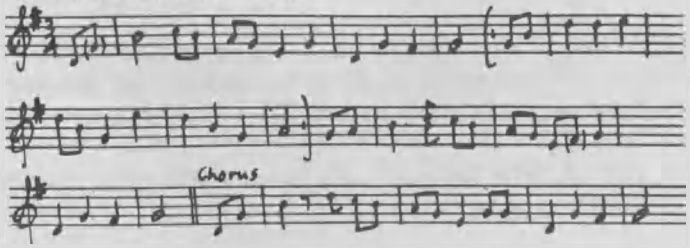
It was always realistic, you know, with their verses, and they were bloody clever, often...

5. *THE SOLDIER AND THE LADY*, sung by Raymond and Frederick Cantwell (with accordion), Standlake, Oxfordshire, England; recorded by Peter Kennedy.

A classic among songs of illicit love is *The Soldier and the Lady*, which has taken many forms, both in Great Britain and America. Always the fiddle appears as a sexual symbol. This version is unique among those collected in having a refrain and a whistled coda. Seventy-three-year-old Frederick Cantwell said emphatically as he finished the recording, "It ain't much now, but I used to be able to whistle just exactly like a nightingale when I had my teeth."

References:

Also titled THE (BOLD) GRENADIER or THE NIGHTINGALES SING. FSJ 34 p. 194 (two versions collected by Hammond in Dorset.) Reeves: The Idiom of the People (two unpublished versions collected by Cecil Sharp), in Southern England is usually a "Polly Oliver" variant, or this one, "Green Bushes." (Cf WEE ROVING LASSIE, Vol. I, Side A, Track 8.)



1) As I was walking one morning in May,
I saw a sweet couple together at play,
O the one was a fair maid and her beauty shone clear,
The other was a soldier and a brave grenadier.

Chorus:
But they kissed so sweet and comforting as they pressed to each other,
They went (h)armin' along the road like sister and brother
They went (h)armin' along the road till they came to a spring,
Then they both sat down together just to hear the nightingale sing. (Whistle)

2) Then out of his knapsack he drew a long fiddle,
And he played to her such merry tunes that she (h)ever did hear;
And he played to her such merry tunes, caused the valleys to ring;
"Hark, hark" replied the fair maid, " 'Ow the nightingale sing."

3) O come said the soldier, 'tis time to give o'er,
O no, says the fair maid, please play one tune more,
I do like your playing and the touching of the long string,
And to see the pretty flowers grow, hear the nightingale sing.

4) "O now," said the fair maid, "Come soldier marry me."
"O no," replied the soldier, "'Ow (h)ever can that be?
For I've a nice little wife at home in my (h)own counteree,
And she's a smarter little woman that your (h)eyes (h)ever seen." *(Cho.)*

6. *BEHIND THE BUSH IN THE GARDEN,* played on the Uillean pipes by Seamus Ennis, Dublin, Ireland; recorded by Alan Lomax.

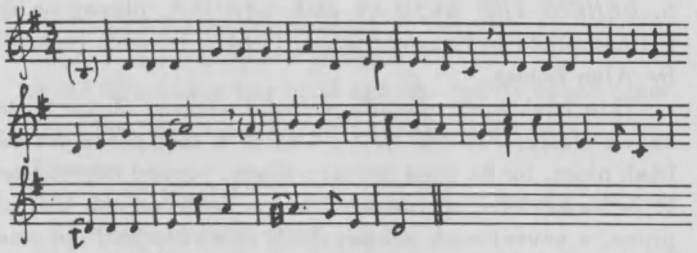
This Irish reel, actually a modal version of the better known *Molly, Put the Kettle On,* is a test piece for the Irish piper, for he must produce sharp, popped notes. Here it is masterfully played by Seamus Ennis on the Uillean pipes, a seventeenth century Irish invention and the most elaborate form of bagpipe. Uillean pipes are essentially an indoor instrument. Blown by small elbow bellows, they include the two-octave chanter (melody pipe), three drones (tenor, middle and bass) at intervals of an octave and tuned to the keynote of the set, and three regulators (pipes fitted with brass keys) that provide simple second and fifth harmony chords. For another description of these pipes, see notes on *The Brown Thorn* (Vol. I, Side A, No. 12).

7. *NEVER WED AN OLD MAN,* sung by Jeannie Robertson, Aberdeen, Scotland; recorded by Alan Lomax.

This might be called a ballad variant of the more common and less satirical *Old Grey Beard Newly Shaven* (see Vol. I, Side B, No. 5). In this form, it seems to be known only in Scotland and the north and west of England, indicating a Scots origin.

References:

Gavin Greig: Folk Songs of the North East (ii) art 149; Kidson: Traditional Tunes and Folk Songs of the North Country (one verse from Yorkshire); FSJ 9 p. 273 (another version of the tune). Cecil Sharp adds a note that the song "is commonly sung in the West of England." Gardiner MS (unpublished.)



1) For a' aul' man come courtin' me,
Hi-doo-a-darrity,
A' aul' man come courtin' me,
Hi-doo-a-day.
For a' aul' man come courtin' me,
Hi-doo-a-darrity,
Maids when you're young never wed a' aul' man.

2) For when we went to the church,
I left him in the lurch,
When we went to the church,
Me being young,
When we went to the church
I left him in the lurch,
Maids when you're young never wed a' aul' man.

3) For when we went to oor tea
He started teasing me.
When we went to oor tea,
Me being young;
When we went to oor tea
He started teasing me,
Maids when you're young never wed a' aul' man.

4) When we went to our bed
He lay as he was dead,
When we went to oor bed,
Me being young;
When we went to oor bed
He lay as he was dead,

Maids when you're young never wed a' aul' man.

5) For he has no tooraloo
Right-fol-the-dooralo,
He has no tooralo
Right fol-the-day;
For he has no tooral
To full up my dooralo,
Maids when you're young never wed a' aul' man.

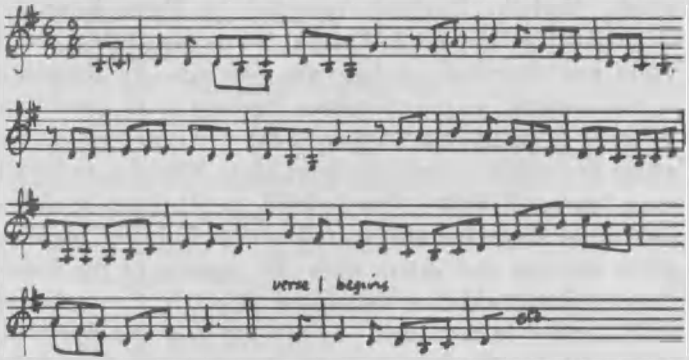
8. *THE MAID OF AUSTRALIA*, sung by Harry Cox, Yarmouth, Norfolk, England; recorded by Peter Kennedy.

Contrary to the opinion of my Australian colleagues, I doubt that *The Maid of Australia* was actually composed in that country, as they suppose. It seems much more likely to be a broadside fantasy about a country which the writer had never visited. However, John Meredith in "Folk Song Journal," Vol. 8, No. 3, 1958, p. 50, links it with a number of bush ballads that describe liaisons between white settlers and native girls. He speaks of the *Goondiwindi Song*, which tells of the plight of "bare-footed Sally...rolled in the bindi" by a white man and deserted, along with her illegitimate baby. He cites *The King Billy Song* and the *Warrego Lament*, about an Australian black girl who had learned the vices and acquired the diseases of civilization. There is also *The Convict and His Loubra* (sweetheart) recounting the courtship of a black girl by a convict, *The Bastard from the Bush*, *The Flash Stockman*, *The Shearer's Lament* and the *Jackie-Jack* cycle, none of which are printable. He quotes a vivid piece of outback verse called *Black Alice*, which runs:

O don't you remember Black Alice, Sam Holt,
Black Alice, so dusky and dark –
That Warrego gin with the straw through her nose
And teeth like a Moreton Bay shark?

The villainous sheep-wash tobacco she smoked,
In the gunyah down there by the lake?
The grubs that she gathered, the lizards she stewed,
And the damper you taught her to bake?

All of these ballads, however, are couched in Australian lingo and bear the marks of the tough life of the Australian pioneer, whereas *The Maid of Australia* is a gentle creature who really lost her way on the banks of an English stream.



1) As I walked down by the 'Awkesburgh Banks
Where the maids of Australia do play their wild pranks,
Beneath a green shady bower I sat myself down
Where the birds sang so gaily enchanted all round,
In the forest, the native Australia,
In the forest, the native Australia
Where the maidens are handsome and gay.

2) Now she dived in the water without fear or dread,
Her beautiful limbs she exceedingly spread,
Her hair hung in wrinkles, the colour was black,
Sir, said she, you will see how I float on my back
Where the maidens are handsome and gay.

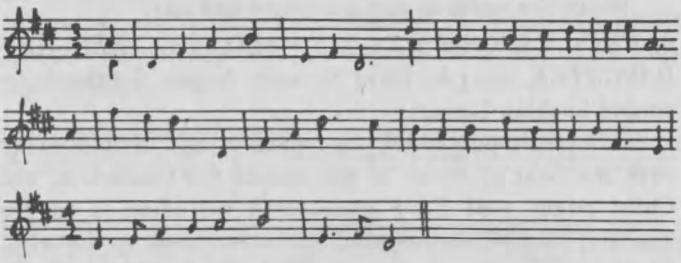
3) Now being exhausted she came to the brink,
"Assistance, kind sir, for I surely shall sink."
As quick as the lightning I took hold of her hand,
My foot slipped and we fell on the sand,
On the native the plains of Australia,
Here on the native the plains of Australia
Where the maidens are handsome and gay.

9. *THE MERCHANT'S SON AND THE BEGGAR'S DAUGHTER,* sung by Davy Stewart, Angus, Scotland; recorded by Alan Lomax.

This little-published, or unpublished, ballad ranks with the best of those at the end of the Child list, and Child might well have considered including it in his canon if he had encountered it. As rendered in the wild, ranting street singer style by Davy Stewart, it seems to me one of the great ballad performances on record. The story is an old and familiar one which Boccaccio would have enjoyed – a raw collop off the haunch of life. Davy Stewart explains its background:

There was some of those tinker girls was very good-looking. They'd go away all day with a basket, hawking, and one girl would say, "We'll have a little drop before we go home." And there would be a ploughman sitting in the pub, and he would buy something, studs or bootlaces, and then the girl would get a cigarette from him, or a few shillings to have a drink – and they'd rob him of his money. And he couldn't say anything about it because he shouldn't be there along with the tinker girls. In them days it wasn't wrong for her to go and put her hands round his back and rob him. They were two distinct classes then – the ploughmen and the tinkers – and if she'd marry him she'd always have the inclination to be away on the road like... The ploughboys were afraid that if they got a child with a farm-girl, they'd have to pay for

it. But the tinker girl would be away. There was a lot of carry-on between the two of them all over Scotland and Ireland, and I suppose England, too... This man was out for a good time, and he had a lot of money with him, and he met the tinker-woman and tried her, but he rued the day he did."



1) A merchant's son he lived in wrong,
And to a-beggin' he has gone;
He mounted on a noble steed,
And away with pleasure he did ride.

Chorus:
O-lal-the-dooral-ido,
Lal-the-day

2) A beggar wench he chance to meet,
A beggar wench with low degree,
He took pity on her distress
And says, "My lass, you've got a pretty face."

3) They both inclined noo to have a drink,
Into a public house they both went,
They both drunk ale and brandy, too,
Till the both of them got rollin fu'.

4) They both inclined noo to go to bed,
Soon under cover they were laid;
Strong ale and brandy went to their head,
And both now slept as they were dead.

5) *Later on this wench she rose,*
And putting on noo the merchant's clothes,
With her hat so high and her sword so clear,
*And she's away with sir gadgie's lowee.**
*(*Man's money in tinker's cant.)*

6) Early next morning the merchant rose
And looking round for to find his clothes,
There's nothing left into the room
But a ragged petticoat and a winsey goon.

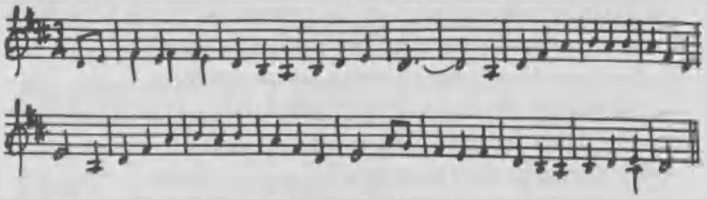
7) The merchant being a stranger to the toon,
He put on the old coat and gown;
And down the street he soundly swore
He would never lie with a beggar no more.

10. *THE BOLD ENGLISH NAVVY,* sung by Lal Smith, tinker of Belfast, Northern Ireland; recorded by Peter Kennedy and Sean O'Boyle.

This song, as well as the threshing machine ballad, were recorded by Peter Kennedy and Sean O'Boyle during two all-night sessions in Belfast in the summer of 1952. An Irish artist had been living with the traveling folk, had learned their "cant" (language) and so was able to overcome the shyness normal to these folk. The men sang first, after a couple of drinks, but it was not until far into the night that the young girls, who scarcely ever sing in public, took courage. As the men lay drousing, the girls began to compete with each other, singing by turns until dawn while their babies slept peacefully, wrapped up in their shawls. Their distinctive style of singing is common to the gypsies of all parts of the British Isles, but in Ireland it is most strongly marked. The singers employ a nasal tone, prolong and dwell on the consonants, often begin lines with the sound "oh," mix texts and tunes. Perhaps one can discern here some influence from modern

crooning, but the final impression is of a distinctive old way of singing altered by various recent influences.

The ballad here perhaps contains the most savage imagery of all the songs in this collection, and it is interesting to note that a Scots version has the refrain, "Wi' my coortin coat on," instead of, "With his navvy boots on."



1) O I'm a bold English navvy that fought on the line,
The first place I met was Newcastle-in-Tyne,
I been tired, sick and weary from working all day,
To a cot down by the hillside I'm making my way.

2) O I first had me supper and then had a shave,
For courtin' this fair maid I highly prepared;
Th'old stars in the sky as the moon it shone down,
And I hit for the road with my navvy boots on.

3) I knocked at my love's window – my knock she did know,
And out of her slumber she woken so slow.
I knocked there again and she said, "Is that John?"
And I quickly replied, "With my navvy boots on."

4) O she opened the window and then left me in.
'Twas into her bedroom she landed me then.
Th'old night it being cold and the blankets rolled on,
And I slept there all night with my navvy boots on.

5) *O then early next morning at the dawn of the day,*
Said I to me true love, "It's time to go away."
"Sleep down, sleep down, you know you've done wrong
For to sleep here all night with your navvy boots on."

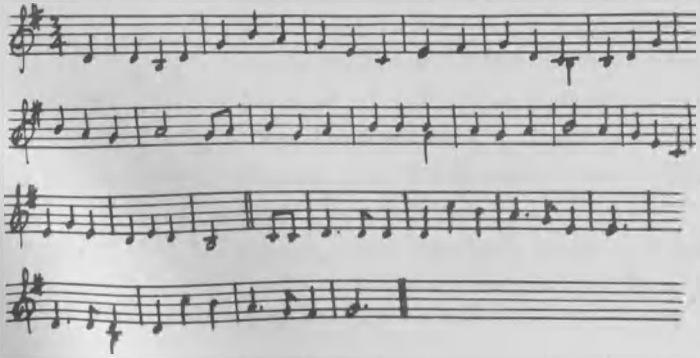
6) *O he bent down his head with a laugh and a smile*
Saying, "What could I do, love, in that length of time?
And I know if I done it, I done it in fun,
And I'll do it again, with my navvy boots on."

7) *O then six months being over and seven at the least,*
When this pretty fair maid got stout round the waist,
For eight months being over, when nine comes along
And she handed him a young son with his navvy boots on.

8) O come all you pretty fair maids take a warning by me,
Don't ever leave a navvy go into your bed.
For when he'll get warm and think upon yon,
Sure, he'll jump on your bones with his navvy boots on.

11. *CRUISING ROUND YARMOUTH*, sung by Harry Cox, Yarmouth, Norfolk, England; recorded by Alan Lomax.

The Maid of Amsterdam is the best known folk song to exploit the sexually symbolic features of the sailing ship and the sailor's life. There are, however, other songs of this type, including *The Roving Kind, Maggie May, The Cruise of the Calabar* and, the most obscene of all, *The Good Ship Venus*. Yet none of these can compare in aptness of imagery, in simplicity and strength of language to this masterpiece from Harry Cox and Norfolk.



1) While cruisin' round Yarmouth one day for a spree,
I met a fair damsel, the wind blowing free,
"I'm a fast going clipper, my kind sir," said she,
"I'm ready for cargo, my hold it is free."
Singing fal-the-ral-laddy right-fal-the-ral-day,
Fal-the-ral laddy right fal-the-ral-day.

2) I gave her the rope and I took her in tow,
From yardarm to yardarm a-towing we go,
I lift up her hatches, found plenty of room,
And into her cabin I stuck my jibboom.

3) She took me upstairs and her topsails she lowered,
In a neat little parlour she soon had me moored,
She laid in her foresails, her staysails an' all,
With her lily-white hand on my *reef-tackle fall.**

4) I said, "Pretty fair maid, it's time to give o'er,
Betwixt wind and water you've ran me ashore,
My shot locker's empty and powders all spent,
I can't fire a shot for it's choked at the vent."

5) Here's luck to the girl with the black curly locks,
Here's luck to the girl who ran Jack on the rocks,
Here's luck to the doctor who eased all his pain,
He squared his mainyards; he's a-cruisin' again.

*signifies "belt"

Volume II

Songs of Seduction

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