

The Wraggle Taggle Gypsies, O!

Words & Music:
Traditional Scottish

These observations are not my own, but I no longer have the source: "According to Child, printed versions of this ballad probably date back to at least 1720. The first documented printing was in Tea Table Miscellany (1740). Lady Casslilles Lilt (aka Johnny Faa, the Gypsiey Laddie) is in the Skene Manuscripts which holds documents from the 17th century. The gypsies were expelled from Scotland in 1541 and then in 1609. In 1624 Johnny Faa (a title of prominent gypsies) and seven other men were sentenced to hang and Helen Faa and ten women were sentenced to be drown, but the women's execution was stayed. Circa 1788 this ballad became associated with John, the sixth earl of Cassilis & his first wife, Lady Jean Hamilton. Before her marriage Lady Jean was in love with "Johnny Faa, of Dunbar." Years later, after she had borne two children, Johnny Faa returned and persuaded her to elope. Johnny Faa and seven other gypsies (which correlates to the 1624 sentence) were hanged & Lady Jean was banished & confined in a tower built specifically for her imprisonment. Eight heads, effigies of the gypsies, were said to be carved in the stone tower."

Cm G7 Cm
Once, there were three gypsies a-come to my door,
Ab Gm
And called up to my lady, O!
Eb Cm Eb Fm
Quickly she, very, very merrily,
Gm Cm
Went away with the wraggle taggle gypsies, O!

Then she pulled off her silk finished gown
And put on hose of leather, O!
The ragged, ragged, rags about our door,
She's gone with the wraggle taggle gypsies, O!

It was late last night, when my lord came home,
Enquiring for his a-lady, O!
The servants said, on every hand,
She's gone with the wraggle taggle gypsies, O!

O saddle to me my milk-white steed,
Go and fetch me my pony, O!
That I may ride and seek my bride,
Who is gone with the wraggle taggle gypsies, O!

O he rode high and he rode low,
He rode through woods and copses too,
Until he came to an open field,
And there he espied his a-lady, O!

What makes you leave your house and land?
What makes you leave your money, O?
What makes you leave your new wedded lord?
To go with the wraggle taggle gypsies, O!

What care I for my house and my land?
What care I for my money, O?
What care I for my new wedded lord?
I'm off with the wraggle taggle gypsies, O!

Last night you slept on a goose-feather bed,
With the sheet turned down so bravely, O!
And to-night you'll sleep in a cold open field,
Along with the wraggle taggle gypsies, O!

What care I for a goose-feather bed?
With the sheet turned down so bravely, O!
For to-night I shall sleep in a cold open field,
Along with the wraggle taggle gypsies, O!