

# The Squire of Edinburgh

*stately d. = 50*

In Edinburgh there lived a squire, a squire of high degree.  
He courted a country girl, and a country girl was she.  
When her old father came to hear, a crazy man was he,  
Still begging of his daughter dear to shun his company.

*Sung by Leo Spencer, Lakefield, Ontario  
Collected by Edith Fowke, September, 1962  
Transcribed by Peggy Seeger*

In Edinburgh there lived a squire, a squire of high degree.  
He courted a country girl, and a country girl was she,  
When her old father came to hear, a crazy man was he,  
Still begging of his daughter dear to shun his company.

There was a farmer lived in the west who had one only son,  
He courted this pretty fair maid till she thought he had her won.  
He got consent from all her friends, her father and mother likewise.  
Oh, soon she cries, "I am undone!" as the tears rolled from her eyes.

She wrote her love a letter and she sealed it with her hand,  
Saying that she was to be married unto a farmer's son,  
But when he read those first few lines he laughed and then did say:  
"Oh, I'll deprive him of his life all on his wedding day."

So he wrote her back an answer both sharp and both keen:  
"Go dress yourself in green", he cries, "and dress yourself in green;"  
"Go dress yourself in green," he cries. "The same clothes I will wear,  
And I will take you from his side in spite of all who's there."

So he looked east, he looked west, he looked all o'er his land.  
He counted out fourscore and men of his own Scottish clan.  
He mounted them unto milk-white steeds; their clothing was blue and green.  
Away he rode to Edinburgh with his company dressed in green.

But when he came to the wedding house the company invited him in.  
"Then did you see that lord who had rode along in green?"  
He looked at them, he scoffed at them, and he smiled and then did say:  
"Oh, maybe they're some fairy troop who carried on the way."

He drank a glass of their good port wine, oh he drank a toast all round,  
Saying, "Happy is the young man to whom they call the groom,  
But happier is the young man who will enjoy the bride;  
There must be one in this company that would take her from his side."

So up steps the groom himself, and an angry man was he,  
Saying, "If it's fighting you came here, I am the man for thee."  
"It is not fighting I come here, it's friendship for to show;  
Give me one kiss from your lovely bride and away from you I'll go."

He took her by the middle small and by the grass-green sleeve;  
He marched right out of the wedding house, of the company asked no leave.  
The drums did beat, the fife did play, 'twas glory to be seen,  
And away he rode through Edinburgh with his company dressed in green.

Professor Child gave some dozen versions of this ballad under the title of "Katharine Jaffray" in *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Vol. IV, pp. 216-31. More recently it has been documented in Bertrand Bronson's *Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads*, Vol. III (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 352-58, and Tristram Coffin's *The British Traditional Ballad in North America*, rev. ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), pp. 132-33; 261-62. Child's texts were all from Scotland and did not mention Edinburgh, but in his introduction he referred to a recitation by an Irishwoman living in Massachusetts which corresponds quite closely to most of the twentieth-century versions.

In recent times this ballad has been quite popular in Canada but comparatively rare elsewhere. Bronson gives only eleven versions of which three are Canadian, two American, three Irish, two Scottish, and one English. He cites two that Helen Creighton collected in Nova Scotia and one that Phillips Barry found in New Brunswick. In addition, both Maud Karpeles and Kenneth Peacock found it in Newfoundland, Arthur Fauset gives a cante-fable version from Nova Scotia, and I have two Ontario versions: a total of at least eight from Canada, which outnumbers reports from any other country.

Most versions are cast in the short ballad stanza; the only other reported text with the double stanza form like Mr. Spencer's is one Cecil Sharp collected in Exford in 1906 from an eighty-four-year-old man (Bronson, p. 355). That is also the only other one that is as full as Mr. Spencer's, and it is set to a tune very similar to his.

The Ontario version is obviously Irish, an origin emphasized by the phrase "the fairy troop" which was used as a title by Petrie and occurs also in versions sung by Thomas Moran of County Leitrim and Mrs. Sullivan of County Cork (Bronson, pp. 353, 356, 357).

*Edith Fowke*