

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Prince Heathen

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Young Margaret sat in a tower high
And she's as pale as a milk white swan
When she saw a shadow on the plain
Come betwixt her and the sun.

"Oh, mother, is it a thundercloud
Or a flight of ravens in the air,
Or a black army with a silver flag
And a ragged man amongst them there?"

"Oh, daughter, go run in your little yard
And bid adieu to your flowers so gay.
For yonder comes Prince Heathen's men
And I fear they're coming to take you away."

In there come Prince Heathen then, saying
"Good day mother-in-law to you.
And where will I find that sweet little bride
With her hands as soft as morning dew?"

Young Margaret locked her bower door
But his men soon made the hinges spring
And in there come Prince Heathen then
And give to her a gay gold ring.

Back at him the ring she flung
She cries "Of you I have no fear.
I'll call you wolf-hound seven times
Rather than call you husband dear."

He swore then, by her yellow hair,
He'd make her weep and call him dear.
He's taken her in his two dark arms,
And laid her on the cold stone floor.

And when he set her free again,
Her maidenhead from her he's ta'en:
"Ha ha, bonny maid, will you weep now?"
"You heathenish dog, nor yet for you."

He's cast her down in a cabin of stone
Where forty locks did hang thereto.

"Ha ha, bonny maid, will you weep now?"

"You heathenish dog, nor yet for you."

"Come, give my lady of the salt, salt meat,

And bitter vinegar for her brew,

"Ha ha, bonny maid, will you weep now?"

"You heathenish dog, nor yet for you."

Prince Heathen down from the mountains came
Where he'd been hunting with his armoured men.

He came unto this fair young maid

All in the prison where she is laid.

"A drink, a drink, Prince Heathen" she said.

"Even if it's from the muddy well pool."

"Never a drink! Will you weep now?"

"You heathenish dog, nor yet for thee."

He's taken her by her yellow hair,

And tied it to his horse's tail.

He's dragged her through the bushes and briars

That grow so thick all on the plain

"Ride slower, slower, Prince Heathen" she says

"Already the blood has filled me shoe".

"Ha ha, bonny maid, will you weep now?"

"You heathenish dog, nor yet for you."

He shortened stirrups and on he flew,

And with her body he's harrowed the road.

Her silken skirt in tatters tore,

Her silken blouse was spattered with blood.

"Ride slower, slower, Prince Heathen," she says

"For the road it sorely hurts my knee".

"Ha ha, bonny maid, will you weep now?"

"You heathenish dog, nor yet for thee."

He shortened stirrups and on he flew.

He's dragged her through the briar and thorns.

Young Margaret gave a pitiful cry,

And there she's had her little babe born.

"Oh how can I wrap me sweet little babe

Seeing as I've nothing to roll him in?"

He give to her his saddle blanket

"That'll roll him from cheek to chin".

As she took the blanket from his hand

Tears down her cheeks they trickling run.
"Ha ha, bonny maid, will you weep now?".
"You heathenish dog, nor yet for you."

"I'm weeping for me own little son;
Your blanket's too rough to roll him in,
Ever and alas, the day I rue
That ever I met such rogues as you!"

He says "Go wash my baby in the milk,
And dress my lady in the silk;
When hearts are breaking, hands must bow,
And well I love my lady now".

She says "When violets bloom on the window-pane
And roses grow on the kitchen floor,
It's then that I'll return again
And be your bride forevermore".

Child #104

A. L. Lloyd refurbished this ancient Child ballad. The
chilling tension of the song stems from the juxtaposition be-
tween stark physical brutality and psychological complexity.

Recorded by Frankie Armstrong

SOF