

# Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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## Skewball (4)

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Come, gentlemen sportsmen, I pray listen well,  
I will sing you a song in praise of Skew Ball;  
And how he came over, you shall understand,  
It was by Squire Mervin, the pearl of the land.  
And of his late actions as you've heard before,  
He was lately challeng'd by one Sir Ralph Gore,  
For five hundred pounds, on the plains of Kildare,  
To run with Miss Sportly, that famous grey mare.

Skew Ball then hearing the wager was laid,  
Unto his kind master said -- Don't be afraid;  
For if on my side you thousands lay would,  
I would rig on your castle a fine mass of gold!  
The day being come, and the cattle walk'd forth,  
The people came flocking from East, South, and North,  
For to view all the sporters, as I do declare,  
And venture their money all on the grey mare.

Squire Mervin then, smiling, unto them did say,  
Come, gentlemen, all that have money to lay;  
And you that have hundreds I will lay you all,  
For I'll venture thousands on famous Skew Ball.  
Squire Mervin then smiling, unto them did say,  
Come gentleman sportsmen, to morrow's the day,  
Spurs, horses, and saddles and bridles prepare,  
For you must away to the plains of Kildare.

The day being come, and the cattle walk'd out,  
Squire Mervin order'd his rider to mount,  
And all the spectators to clear the way,  
The time being come not one moment delay.  
The cattle being mounted away they did fly,  
Skew Ball like an arrow pass'd Miss Sportly by;  
The people went up to see them go round,  
They said in their hearts they ne'er touch'd the ground.

But as they were running in the midst of the sport,  
Squire Mervin to his rider began his discourse;  
O! loving kind rider, come tell unto me,  
How far at the moment Miss Sportly's from thee;  
O! loving kind master, you bear a great style,  
The grey mare's behind you a long English mile,

If the saddle maintains me, I'll warrant you there,  
You ne'er shall be beat on the plains of Kildare.  
But as they were running by the distant chair,  
The gentlemen cry'd out -- Skew Ball never fear,  
Altho' in this country thou was't ne'er seen before,  
Thou has beaten Miss Sportly, and broke Sir Ralph Gore.

This is an Irish song, with several traditional versions known, but the only traditional Irish version I've seen, text and tune, is in the relatively recent book by Hugh Shields, <<Old Dublin Songs>>. Shields in his notes mentions no other copy of the song or tune. There is a copy of the song in P. Buchan's MSS in the British Library.

Original tune is a puzzle; one old copy says tune is "Money makes the mare to go". Is this a poke of fun, or real? In the 17th century "Money makes the mare to go" was sung to "She got money by th' bargain", which we give later here as SHAMBUY2. "Money will make the mare to go" is the occasional title of the catch that commences "Wilt thou lend me thy mare to go a mile?", but the catch tune doesn't seem to fit this.

From <<The Vocal Library>>, London: John Souter, 1818. The song is without music or tune direction.

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