

When I Was a Lady

When I Was a Lady

When I was a lady,
A lady, a lady--
When I was a lady,
Oh! then, oh! then, oh! then,
It was hey oh! this way,
This way, this way;
It was hey oh! this way,
Oh! then, oh! then, oh! then.

When I got married,
Got married, got married--[etc.]

When I got a baby,
A baby, a baby--[etc.]

When my baby cried,
Cried, cried--[etc.]

When my baby died,
Died, died--[etc.]

When I had a bustle,
A bustle, a bustle--[etc.]

When my bustle fell,
Fell, fell--[etc.]

Nicholson Golspie (1897), 164; tune, 204, a version of There's Nae Luck About the House. At "hey oh! this way" the girls introduced some action (e.g. rocking a baby) suggested by the earlier part of the stanza. N. quotes comparable material from Jackson & Burne, Shropshire Folk-lore (p. 514), and M. H. Mason, Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs, 42, which latter "may be the original of all", but certainly suggests that the Golspie lady is a corruption of maiden: "When I was a maiden, O, then, and O, then" etc. Several English versions in Gomme Trad. Games II (1898), 362 ff. ("When I was a Young Girl"), with note on pantomimic games; Gomme & Sharp II (1909), 10. Cf. also Colin Brown in The Thistle, xxix, who refers to "the graceful movements of rows of little girls marching and counter-marching to the sweet melody

. . . When I am a lady, a lady, a lady, When I am a lady, a lady am I."

Opies Singing Game (1985), 294, has a Cumnock version from 1961, with differs: 4 a lady was I. 5-6 'Twas this was and that way, and this way and that way, 7-8 [as 3-4]. The other stanzas feature "a gentleman", "a baker", "a teacher". Similarly in Fraser (1975), 23, from Aucherarder, with a version from Dunfermline, "Did you ever see a lassie, a lassie, a lassie,/ Did you ever see a lassie do this way and that?"--done in a ring; the one in the middle does some action (hop, fancy step, etc.), imitated by the rest.

The Opies' tune (from Dumfries, 1960) is the same as that of "Jack-a-needle", i.e. La Guaracha. See also their comparative notes (296-7) from many countries. Cf. "I Married a Wife", which is a more sophisticated

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