

# Traditional & Folk Songs with lyrics & midi music

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## The Earl of Errol

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Errol it's a bonnie place,  
It stands upon a plain;  
A bad report this lady's raised  
That Errol's no' a man.

cho: Wi' the rantin' o't and the dauntin' o't,  
According as ye ken,  
The thing they ca' the rantin' o't,  
Lady Errol lies her lane.

"What needs I wash my apron  
And hang it on a dyke?  
What needs they ca' me Errol's wife  
When I gang sae maiden-like?

"What needs I wash my petticoat  
Or hang it on a pin?  
For lang will I gang but-and-ben  
Ere I hear the bairnies' din.

"What needs I wash my apron  
Or dry it upon a door?  
What needs I eek my petticoat  
Hangs even doon afore."

"When I cam' in by yon canal  
And by yon bowling-green,  
I micht hae pleased the best Carnegie  
That ever bore the name.

"But as sure as your name is Kate Carnegie  
And mine is Gilbert Hay,  
I'll gar your faither sell his lands  
Your tocher for tae pay."

"Tae gar my faither sell his lands,  
Wad that no' be a sin?  
Pay tocher tae a worthless lord  
That cannae get a son!"

Now Errol's gotten 't at his will

Tae choose a maid himsel',  
And he has chosen a country lass  
Cam' in her milk tae sell.

He kept her locked intae a room  
Three quarters o' a year,  
And when three quarters ended were,  
A braw young son she bare.

There wasnae a lord in Edinburgh  
But tae Peggy gied a ring,  
And there wasnae a lad in a' the toon  
But on Katie had a sang.

"Look up, look up, my pretty Peggy,  
Look up and think nae shame;  
I'll mak' ye Lady Errol," he said,  
"And Kate shall be sent hame."

"Tak' hame your dochter, Carnegie," he said,  
"And wed her tae a man,  
For Errol cannae please her  
Nor nane o' a' his men!"

Child #231

Recorded by Ewan MacColl on "Traditional Songs and Ballads,"  
and printed in his book "Folk Songs and Ballads of Scotland."  
According to Child, Gilbert Hay, the tenth Earl of Errol, married  
Catherine Carnegie on January 7, 1658. Errol died in 1674 without  
having had children by Catherine. These marital problems may have  
produced a hearing in 1659. (According to at least one text, the  
Carnegies may have conspired to force the matter, probably to avoid  
having to pay a dowry.) To the best of my knowledge, this is the only  
ballad in the Child collection to contain a clear (if indirect) reference  
to homosexuality. RW

Or at least to infertility. I suspect that in a society that was  
wrapped up in lineage, barrenness was at least as heinous a sin as  
homosexuality. RG

glossary:

a': all afore:

before, i.e. in front

bairnies': babies'

braw: brave, i.e. handsome

but-and-ben: in and out

ca': call

cam': came

canna: can not

dochter: daughter

doon: down  
eek: increase, i.e. lengthen  
gang: go  
gied: gave  
gar: make, cause to  
hae: have  
hame: home  
intae: into, i.e. in  
lane: lone, i.e. alone  
lang: long  
mak': make  
micht: might  
nae: no  
no': not  
sae: so  
sang: song  
tae: to  
tak': take  
tocher: dowry  
toon: town  
wad: would  
wasnae: was not

RW