

Maria Marten and the Red Barn Mystery

Retreat Air

The image displays a musical score for a pipe tune. It consists of seven staves of music, each beginning with a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is written in a single line on each staff, featuring a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots at the end of the seventh staff.

Maria Marten and the Red Barn Mystery: This is the name Lizzie Higgins had for the tune also known as “The Gipsy’s Warning”, which is, if anything, a still odder title: “Gipsy’s Warning” being Cockney rhyming slang for “morning”; it can also mean “no warning at all.” Although I queried the title when I heard it from her, thinking it was too strange a one for a pipe tune, she was determined that this was its name. I had not heard it before and wrote it down from her singing at Orchard Place, Aberdeen, on 2nd February 1986. The alternative title leads back to yet another old melodrama, Ida Black’s *Under a Curse: or, The Gypsy’s Warning*. There may also be a connection with the popular drawing room song, “Do not trust him, gentle lady. The Gipsy’s Warning” which was published in 1873 and circulated in sheet music form throughout the later Victorian period into the early years of the 20th century. The writer James Joyce owned a copy. There is a recorded version by Colin MacLellan, and also by Sprangeen (the acoustic all-girl group whose elegant and witty music made such a refreshing contrast to most of the heavily-driven Scottish folk rock of the time). The latter was the first time I heard anybody except Lizzie doing it; they both use the “Gipsy’s Warning” title. The tune seems to have been first published in a pipe setting with the title “The Gypsy’s Warning” in J. D. Ross Watt’s *Empire Book of Pipe Tunes* in 1934 (the *Oban Times* reviewed this rather grudgingly,

(continued from previous page) suggesting that a good deal of the material Watt had assembled didn't really go very well on the pipes). So, a fine example, then, of a tune which probably entered the pipe repertoire from a song source, passed out of the repertoire again, and then re-entered it half a century later also as the result of a sung performance (although Lizzie did not seem to have words to this).

Market Chorus

Polka



Market Chorus: This tune is probably an early Victorian one, being published in *Kerr's Merry Melodies* vol. 2. It might sit quite well in a set of polkas.



An Edinburgh street market in the mid 19th century with St. Giles in the background