



Meg Merrilies

Rutland Boughton
(1878-1960)

Meg Merrilies

The character Meg Merrilies appears in Sir Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering* (1815) and was based on Jean Gordon, an inhabitant of the village of Kirk Yetholm, in the Cheviot Hills, in the middle of the eighteenth century. The poet John Keats heard of the Scottish Gypsy woman when on a walking tour of Scotland.

Keats' poem is of the old gipsy woman on the moors of Scotland; an area of open, peaty wasteland, overgrown with heath. Keats describes her free, though hard and lonely, homeless life. He compared her bravery of to that of Queen Margaret of Scotland (1286-1292). The name 'Meg' is the short form of 'Margaret'. The name 'Merrilies' suggests that she passed her life happily and lived a very long life.

Meg Merrilies

John Keats (1795-1821)

Old Meg she was a Gipsy,
And liv'd upon the Moors:
Her bed it was the brown heath turf,
And her house was out of doors.

Her apples were swart blackberries,
Her currants pods o' broom;
Her wine was dew of the wild white rose,
Her book a churchyard tomb.

Her Brothers were the craggy hills,
Her Sisters larchen trees—
Alone with her great family
She liv'd as she did please.

No breakfast had she many a morn,
No dinner many a noon,
And 'stead of supper she would stare
Full hard against the Moon.

But every morn of woodbine fresh
She made her garlanding,
And every night the dark glen Yew
She wove, and she would sing.

And with her fingers old and brown
She plaited Mats o' Rushes,
And gave them to the Cottagers
She met among the Bushes.

Old Meg was brave as Margaret Queen
And tall as Amazon:
An old red blanket cloak she wore;
A chip hat had she on.
God rest her aged bones somewhere—
She died full long ago!

Meg Merrilies

Rutland Boughton

Allegro, molto marcato

S Old Meg, she was a Gip - sy, And liv'd up - on the Moors; Her

A Old Meg, she was a Gip - sy, And liv'd up - on the Moors; Her

T Old Meg, she was a Gip - sy, And liv'd up - on the Moors; Her

B Old Meg, she was a Gip - sy, And

5 S bed it was the brown heath turf, Her house was out of

A house was out of doors, was out of

T house was out of doors, was out of

B liv'd up - on the Moors.

9 S doors.

A doors. Old Meg, she was a gip - sy.

T doors. Her

B doors. Her ap - ples were swart

pp *mf* *sempre* *marcato il basso* *p*

Meg Merrilies

14

S *p* Her wine was

A *p* Her cur - rant pods o' broom, Her

T ap - ples were swart black - ber - ries, Her cur - rant pods o'

B black - ber - ries, Her cur - rant pods o' broom, Her

17

S dew, Her look a church - yard tomb, *pp* Old

A wine was dew of the wild rose, *mf* Her book a church - yard

T broom, Her book a church - yard tomb. *pp*

B wine was dew of the wild white rose, Her book a church - yard tomb. *dim.* *pp*

21

S *f* Meg, she was a Gip - sy. Her Bro - thers were the

A *pp* tomb. *f* Her Bro - thers

T *f* Her Bro - thers were the

B *f* Her Bro - thers

Meg Merrilies

25

S crag - gy hills, Her Sis - ters larch - en trees, A - lone with her great *cres.*

A were the crag - gy hills, Her Sis - ters larch - en *cres.*

T crag - gy hills, Her Sis - ters larch - en trees, A - lone with *cres.*

B were the crag - gy hills, Her Sis - - - ters *cres.*

29

S fam - i - ly She lived as she did

A trees, A - lone she lived as she did

T her great fam - i - ly, She lived as she did

B larch - en trees, A - lone she

33

S please. *pp*

A please. *pp*

T please. *pp*

B lived, Old Meg, she was a Gip - sy. *pp*

Meg Merrilies

poco meno mosso

37

S

A

T

B

No brak - fast had she ma - ny_a morn, No din - ner ma - ny_a noon, And

No break - fast had she ma - ny_a morn, No

No

42

S

A

T

B

No break - fast had she ma - ny_a morn, No

she _____ would stare Full hard a - gainst the Moon, In -

din - ner ma - ny_a noon, In - stead of _____ sup - per she would

break - fast had she ma - ny_a morn, No din - ner ma - ny_a noon, _____

46

S

A

T

B

din - ner ma - ny_a noon, And 'stead of sup - per she would stare Full

stead _____ of _____ sup - per, she _____ would

stare Full hard _____ a - gainst _____ the _____ Moon, _____

_____ And 'stead of sup - per she would

Meg Merrilies

50

S hard a - gainst the Moon, full hard a -

A stare Full hard a - gainst the Moon, a -

T stare full hard a - gainst the

B stare full hard a - gainst

mf *dim.* *mf* *dim.* *mf* *dim.* *mf* *dim.*

54

S gainst the Moon.

A gainst the Moon.

T moon. Old Meg, she was a Gip - sy.

B the Moon.

pp *pp* *pp* *pp*

Tempo 1mo.

58

S But ev - 'ry morn of wood - bine fresh She made her gar - land -

A But ev - 'ry morn of wood - bine fresh She made her gar - land -

T But ev - 'ry morn of wood - bine fresh She made her

B But ev - 'ry morn of wood - bine fresh She made her

Meg Merrilies

62

S ing, And ev - 'ry night the dark glen Yew She

A ing, And ev - 'ry night the dark glen Yew She

T gar - land - ing, And ev - 'ry night the dark glen Yew She

B gar - land - ing, And ev - 'ry night the dark glen

pp

65

S wove and she would sing. And with her fin - gers

A wove and she would sing. And with her fin - gers

T wove. And with her fin - gers old, And

B Yew she wove. And with her fin - gers old, And

Attacca senza pausa

mf

69

S brown, She plait - ed Mats o' Rush - es, she

A brown, She plait - ed Mats o' Rush - es, she

T with her fin - gers brown, She plait - ed Mats o' Rush - es,

B with her fin - gers brown, She plait - ed Mats o' Rush - es, plait - ed

Meg Merrilies

73

S plait - ed Mats o' Rush - es, And gave them to the

A plait - ed Mats o' Rush - es, And gave

T plait - ed Mats o' Rush - es, And gave them

B Mats o' Rush - es, And gave them

77

S Cot - ta - gers, to the Cot - ta - gers She met a - mong the

A them to the Cot - ta - gers In the

T to the Cot - ta - gers She met a - mong the

B to the Cot - ta - gers.

81

S Bush - es. Old Meg, she was a Gip - sy.

A Bush - es. Old Meg, she was a Gip - sy.

T Bush - es. Old Meg, she was a gip - sy.

B Old Meg, she was a Gip - sy.

pp *poco rit.*

Meg Merrilies

84 *a tempo*

S Old Meg was brave as Mar - garet Queen, And tall as Am - a -

A Old Meg was tall as Am - a -

T Old Meg was brave as Mar - garet, And tall as

B Old Meg was brave and tall as Am - a -

88

S zon, An old red blan - ket cloak she wore, A chip - hat she had

A zon, An old red blan - ket cloak she wore, A chip - hat

T Am - a - zon, An old red blan - ket cloak she wore,

B zon, An old red blan - ket cloak, And a

92 *dim.*

S on. God rest her a - ged bones some - where

A she had on. God rest her

T A chip - hat she had on, God rest her a - ged

B chip - hat she had on. God rest her a - ged

Meg Merrilies

96

S She died full long a - gone, God

A a - ged bones some - where She died full

T bones some - - - where She died

B bones some - where She died

100

S rest her a - ged bones some - where She died full long

A long a - gone, she died full long

T full long a - gone, full long

B full long a - - - gone!

104

S a - gone!

A a - gone!

T a - gone! Old Meg, she was a Gip - sy.

B Old Meg, she was a Gip - sy.

Rutland Boughton (1878-1960) was the son of a grocer of Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire. He showed exceptional talent at an early age and studied briefly at the Royal College of Music. Finances caused him to abandon the RCM after only one year. Although he was substantially self-taught, he had opportunity to study with Charles Villiers Stanford and Walford Davies. He was good friends with Gustav Holst, Granville Bantock, Edward Elgar, Thomas Beecham and George Bernard Shaw. Boughton's output included three symphonies, several concertos, part-songs, songs, and chamber music but he is primarily known as a composer of opera and the principal English advocate of the theories of music drama expounded by Richard Wagner. Boughton set out to create a new form of opera he called "choral drama". He was enamored with Arthurian legends and created an "Arthurian Cycle" of operas. He had planned a fourteen-day cycle of dramas on the life of Christ in which the story would be enacted on a small stage in the middle of an orchestra while soloists and the chorus would comment on the action. However, it never developed. His *Bethlehem* (1915) is based on the Coventry Nativity Play and notable for its choral arrangements of traditional Christmas carols. That work became very popular with choral societies worldwide. Arthurian legends, narrative folk-tales and other stories were often the basis for his part-songs, some titled "Choral Variations". As a result, some of them are a little longer than the norm for the genre.

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