

FOLKWAYS RECORDS SA 2338

AMERICAN BALLADS AND FOLKSONGS

SUNG BY JOAN O'BRYANT EDITED BY KENNETH S. GOLDSTEIN

Single Girl
The Stern Old Bachelor
Life is a Toil
The Promised Land
The House Carpenter's Wife
The Trail to Mexico
The Lily of the West
The Cuckoo

I'm on My Way
A Sailor's Life
Keep Your Hand on the Plow
The Maiden on the Plains
A Soldier's Wife
Marble Town
The Texas Rangers
Tom Sherman's Barroom

Ronald Clyne



AMERICAN BALLADS AND FOLKSONGS

FOLKWAYS RECORDS AND SERVICE CORP.
43 W. 61ST ST., N.Y.C., U.S.A.
DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET



Photograph by WAYNE D. SOURBEER

ABOUT THE SINGER

JOAN O'BRYANT is a native of Kansas, born in Wichita some 26 years ago. Her mother's family includes Kansas pioneers who came to Wichita in the 1890's. The people in Miss O'Bryant's family are largely professional, and though the family was musical, it was certainly not "folk".

Miss O'Bryant received her BA and MA degrees at the University of Wichita and the University of Colorado, and became interested in folk music while at college. After college she worked in the advertising field, but disliked the work and obtained a position at the University of Wichita in the English Department. Her interest in folklore soon became an academic interest, and she organized a course in folklore at the University.

While attending the Ozark Folk Festival at Eureka Springs, Arkansas, she met the outstanding folklorist Vance Randolph, who suggested that she do fieldwork instead of being merely a "library folklorist." She took his advice and has been collecting in the field ever since.

She taught herself to play the guitar and began singing professionally about five years ago, including among her many appearances performances in colleges and clubs in the West and Mid-West, and occasional television work as well.

She is presently an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Wichita, teaching classes in folklore and creative writing in addition to the

usual courses in freshmen composition, etc. She also teaches a two-week summer workshop in Folklore at Kansas State Teacher's College in Pittsburg, Kansas. Miss O'Bryant has also recorded for FOLKWAYS RECORDS an outstanding album of FOLKSONGS AND BALLADS OF KANSAS (FA 2134).

NOTE:

The following songs were collected through the courtesy of the University of Arkansas Folklore Research Project, directed by Mary Celestia Parler: "Tom Sherman's Barroom," "The Cuckoo," "The Maiden On The Plains," "The Lily of the West," "The Stern Old Bachelor," "A Soldier's Wife," and "The Texas Rangers."

Notes by KENNETH S. GOLDSTEIN

SIDE I, Band 1: SINGLE GIRL

This song of female complaint against married life is often confused with the more common complaint entitled "When I Was Single", which usually expresses a man's view of matrimony. "Single Girl", however, is certainly a distinct song in itself, though it may have been inspired by the man's complaint. There is a British song of similar content entitled "When I Was A Maid", but this appears to be a separate versification of this all too common theme. This version was learned from Patti McLaughlin of Seattle, Washington.

When I was single, went dressed all so fine,
Now I'm married, Lord, go ragged all the time.

CHORUS:

Oh, I wish I was a single girl again,
Oh Lordy, Lord, I wish I was a single girl again.

When I was single, ate beef steak and pie,
Now I'm married, Lord, eat cornbread till I die.

Three little children crying for their bread
Make me feel so mournful, Lord, I wish that I was dead.

Wash their little faces, send them to school,
Along comes a drunkard, Lord, and calls them all a fool.

Home comes my husband with a curse and a stare,
Knocking down the children, Lord, and pulling out all my hair.

Dishes to wash and the spring to go to,
When you're married, Lord, you got it all to do.

Single girl, oh single girl, you don't know when
you're free,
If I was a single girl, how happy I would be.

For additional texts and information, see:

Randolph, V., OZARK FOLKSONGS, Volume III, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, 1949. (see under title: "A Married Woman's Lament")

THE FRANK C. BROWN COLLECTION OF NORTH CAROLINA FOLKLORE, Volume III, edited by H. M. Belden and A. P. Hudson, Duke University Press, Durham, 1952.

SIDE I, Band 2: THE STERN OLD BACHELOR

For many centuries, the bachelor and the old maid have been favorite subject matter for numerous songs, tales and jokes. There are numerous songs presenting the complaints and self-pity of those, of both sexes, who are part of this "singular" life. But equally common are boasting songs of those who tell us they would not change their single and carefree life for the yoke of matrimony. Such songs may be an expression of "sour grapes" and a rationalization of the singer's status. This particular bachelor's boast has not been reported too frequently. The version sung here was learned from the singing of Arlene Sherman of Fayetteville, Arkansas.

I'm a stern old bachelor, my age it's forty-four;
I do declare, I'll never live with women anymore.

Little old sod shanty, sod shanty dear to me,
For I'm a stern old bachelor from matrimony free.

I have a stove that's worth ten cents, a table worth
fifteen,
I cook my grub in oyster cans and keep all things so
clean.

I go to bed whene'er I please and get up just the
same,
I wash my socks three times a year with no one to
complain.

And when I come home late at night, I smile and walk
right in,
I never hear a voice yell out or say: "Where have you
been?"

And when I die and go to heaven, as all good
bachelors do,
I will not have to grieve for fear my wife will be
there too.

For additional texts and information, see:

Morris, A. C., FOLKSONGS OF FLORIDA, University of
Florida Press, Gainesville, 1950. (see under title:
"The Jolly Bachelor".)

Randolph, V., OZARK FOLKSONGS, Volume III, State
Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri,
1949.

SIDE I, Band 3: LIFE IS A TOIL

This song, more commonly known as "The Housekeeper's Lament", or "The Housekeeper's Tragedy", may have originally been an Irish topical ballad, though research into Irish sources has not yet uncovered it. In this country, it has been found in several 19th century songsters, and in diaries of early settlers of the Midwest, as well as from traditional singers in Ohio and Florida. It is currently popular with female folksingers in urban communities throughout the country. This shortened version was learned from Patti McLaughlin of Seattle, Washington.

One day as I wandered, I heard a complaining,
I saw an old woman the picture of gloom.
She looked at the mud on her doorstep, 'twas raining,
And this was her song as she wielded her broom.

CHORUS:

Life is a toil and Love is a trouble,
Beauty will fade and riches will flee,
Pleasures they dwindle and prices they double
And nothing is what I would wish it to be.

In March it is mud, it is snow in December,
The midsummer breezes are laden with dust;
In Fall, the leaves litter, in rainy September
The wallpaper rots and the candlesticks rust.

There's too much of worriment goes into a bonnet,
There's too much of ironing goes into a shirt;
There's nothing that pays you the time you put on it,
Nothing that lasts but trouble and dirt.

Last night in my dreams I was stationed forever,
On a far little isle in the midst of the sea;
My one chance for life was a ceaseless endeavor
To sweep off the waves as they swept over me.

Alas, 'twas no dream, for ahead I beheld it,
I knew I was helpless my fate to avert!
She lay down her broom and her apron she folded,
She lay down and died and was buried in dirt.

For additional texts and information, see:

Morris, A. C., FOLKSONGS OF FLORIDA, University of
Florida Press, Gainesville, 1950. (see under title:
"Poor Old Woman".)

SING OUT!, Winter, 1957, Volume 6, Number 4., New
York. (see song #455, under title: "The Housewife's
Lament".)

SIDE I, Band 4: THE PROMISED LAND

This song is very closely related to, if not actually a variant form of, the widely known white spiritual "The Hebrew Children". In one form or another this sacred song appeared frequently in hymnals and religious song books published during the 19th century, including "The Sacred Harp" (1832), "Southern Harmony" (1835) and "The Social Harp" (1855). The song probably originated as a camp-meeting hymn in the South, and from there spread throughout the country. It has been collected from traditional singers throughout the south and midwest, and has even been found in Great Britain, to where it was probably brought by American preachers and lay people who travelled to or settled in England. Miss O'Bryant remembers having heard her grandfather sing this song, but could remember only his tune. The text sung here was learned from H. M. Belden's BALLADS AND SONGS COLLECTED BY THE MISSOURI FOLKLORE SOCIETY, (University of Missouri, 1940).

Where, oh where are the good old patriarchs?
Where, oh where are the good old patriarchs?
Where, oh where are the good old patriarchs?
Way over in the promised land.

CHORUS:

By and by we'll all go meet them,
By and by we'll all go meet them,
By and by we'll all go meet them,
Way over in the promised land.

Where, oh where is father Abraham?
Where, oh where is good old Moses?
Where, oh where are the Hebrew Children?
Way over in the promised land.

CHORUS:

Where, oh where is good old Shadrach?
Where, oh where is good old Meshach?
Where, oh where is good old Abednego?
Way over in the promised land.
They went through the fiery furnace,
They went through the fiery furnace,
They went through the fiery furnace,
Way over in the promised land.

CHORUS:

Where, oh where is the Virgin Mary? (3 times)
Way over in the promised land.
She went through much tribulation, (3 times)
Way over in the promised land.
By and by we'll all go meet her, (3 times)
Way over in the promised land.

CHORUS:

For additional texts and information, see:

Belden, H. M., BALLADS AND SONGS COLLECTED BY THE
MISSOURI FOLKLORE SOCIETY, University of Missouri,
Columbia, Missouri, 1940.

Jackson, G. P., ANOTHER SHEAF OF WHITE SPIRITUALS,
University of Florida Press, Gainesville, Florida,
1952. (see under title: "Ranter's Hymn".)

SIDE I, Band 5: THE HOUSE CARPENTER'S WIFE
(Child #243)

Francis James Child included this ballad in his great
textual compilation, THE ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH POPULAR
BALLADS, under the titles "James Harris" or "The
Daemon Lover". In the New World this ballad is more
popularly known as "The House Carpenter".

Child's "A" text of this ballad (a blackletter broad-
side from the Pepysian collection) was typical of the
low order of composition turned out by broadside
writers of the 17th century. It was Child's opinion
that this broadside was the original or ancestor of
the ballad which has come down in tradition. If such
was indeed the case, then we have an excellent
example of "communal re-creation", for in the course
of oral circulation it has become one of the finest
English language ballads.

In early forms of the ballad, the returning lover is
a "daemon lover" or other supernatural being.
American versions have removed any suggestion of his
supernatural status. Most versions of the ballad end
with the ship sinking and both the house carpenter's
wife and the lover drowning. No so in this version,
in which the wife jumps overboard and is presumably
drowned with no mention of the lover meeting a simi-
lar fate. This version was learned from Fred High,
of High, Arkansas.

Well met, well met, my own true love,
Well met, well met, said he,
I'm just returning from the salty water sea
And it's all for the love of you,
All for the love of thee.

Oh, I could've married a King's daughter, oh,
And she would've married me,
But I have refused a rich crown of gold
And it's all for the love of you,
All for the love of thee.

Well, if you could've married a King's daughter, oh,
I'm sure you are to blame,
For I have married a house carpenter
And I think he's a nice young man,
Think he's a nice young man.

Oh, would you leave your own true love,
And go along with me,
I'll take you where the grass grows green
On the banks of Sweet Willy,
Banks of Sweet Willy.

Oh, what have you got to maintain me on,
And keep me from slavery?
I have seven ships a-sailing for sea
That shall be at your command,
Be at your command.

She took her babe all on her knee
And kisses gave it three,
Saying, "Stay at home, my sweet little babe,
Keep your pappy good company,
Keep your pappy good company."

She dressed herself in scarlet red,
All pasted o'er with green,
And every town that she rode through,
They took her to be some queen,
Took her to be some queen.

They had not been on sea two weeks,
I'm sure it was not three,
Till this young lady began for to weep,
And she wept most bitterly,
Wept most bitterly.

Oh, are you weeping for silver or for gold,
Or are you weeping for fear,
Or are you weeping for your house carpenter
That you left when you come with he here,
That you left when you come with me here.

Oh, I'm not weeping for silver or for gold,
And I'm not weeping for fear,
But I am weeping for my sweet little babe
That I left when I come with you here,
That I never shall see anymore.

They had not been on sea three weeks,
I'm sure it was not four,
When this young lady she sprang from the ship
And she sank for to rise no more,
Sank for to rise no more.

A curse, a curse on all sea men,
A curse, a curse, cried she,
You've robbed me of my sweet little babe
And you've stole-ed my life away,
Stole-ed my life away.

For additional texts and information, see:

Child, F. J., THE ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH POPULAR
BALLADS, Volume IV, The Folklore Press, New York,
1956.

Coffin, T. P., THE BRITISH TRADITIONAL BALLAD IN
NORTH AMERICA, American Folklore Society, Philadel-
phia, 1950.

SIDE I, Band 6: THE TRAIL TO MEXICO

The cowboys, like those of other occupational groups, had their share of songs concerning untrue love.

"The Trail to Mexico" is the story of a cowboy who returns to find that his girl has married "a richer life". His answer is to "travel west where the bullets fly" and to "ride the range till the day I die."

The noted collector, John H. Cox, pointed out that "The Trail to Mexico" was a cleverly reworked adaptation of the British broadside ballad "Early In the Spring." The change in setting is certainly startling, for the British ballad refers to a young man pressed into Naval service who upon learning of his lover's inconstancy swears to "go back where the bullets fly, and sail the seas till the day I die."

Miss O'Bryant is unable to remember from whom she learned this version.

It was in the merry month of May,
When I left for Texas far away,
I left my darling gal behind,
She said her heart was ever mine.

It was in the fall of '93,
When A. J. Stinson hired me,
He said, "Young man, I want you to go
And follow this herd into Mexico."

It was early, early in the year,
When I started out to herd those steers,
Through sleet and snow, 'twas a lonesome go,
As the herd rolled on into Mexico.

Well, when I got to Mexico,
Longed to see my gal, but couldn't go,
I wrote a letter to my dear,
But not a word for a year did I hear.

Well, when I got to my long lost home,
Inquired for the gal I thought my own,
They said she'd married a richer life,
Therefore, wild cowboy, seek another wife.

Oh curse your gold and your silver, too,
God pity a girl who won't be true;
I'm going out West where the bullets fly,
Gonna ride the range till the day I die.

Oh, I'm going back to the Rio Grande,
Gonna join there a cowboy band,
I'm going out West where the bullets fly,
Gonna ride the range till the day I die.

For additional Texts and information, see:

Laws, G. M., NATIVE AMERICAN BALLADRY, American Folklore Society, Philadelphia, Pa., 1950.

Lomax, J. & A., COWBOY SONGS, MacMillan Company, New York, 1948.

Larkin, M., SINGING COWBOY, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1931.

SIDE I, Band 7: THE LILY OF THE WEST

Though originally from Great Britain, where it was a favorite piece with broadside presses in the 19th century, this ballad is better known in tradition in this country than in the Old World. Indeed, only a single version has been reported from tradition in

England, and appears in Baring-Gould's "Songs of the West" (1905 edition) with the note that it was Irish in origin and could be traced back to 1839. The tune and the first stanza of the version sung here were learned from Fred High of High, Arkansas; additional text was learned from H. M. Belden's "BALLADS AND SONGS COLLECTED BY THE MISSOURI FOLKLORE SOCIETY".

I just came down from Louisville,
some pleasure for to find,
A handsome girl from Lexington
so pleasing to my mind,
Her hair was laid in diamonds
and a star upon her breast,
They called her handsome Mary,
the Lily of the West.

I courted her for many a day,
I thought her love to gain.
Too soon, too soon she slighted me,
which caused me grief and pain;
She robbed me of my liberty,
deprived me of my rest;
But still I loved my Mary,
the Lily of the West.

As I walked out one evening
down in yon shady grove,
I saw a lord of high degree
conversing with my love.
He sang, he sang so merrily,
while I was sore distressed;
He sang for handsome Mary,
the Lily of the West.

I rushed up to my rival,
a dagger in my hand,
I caught him by the collar
and boldly bade him stand.
Being mad to desperation,
my dagger pierced his breast.
I was betrayed by Mary,
the Lily of the West.

And now my trial has come off,
and sentenced soon I'll be.
They put me in the criminal box
and there convicted me.
She so deceived the jury,
so modestly did dress,
She far outshone bright Venus,
the Lily of the West.

Since then I've gained my liberty,
I'll roam the country through,
I'll travel the cities over
and find my loved one true.
Though she robbed me of my liberty,
deprived me of my rest,
Still I love my Mary,
the Lily of the West.

For additional texts and information, see:

Belden, H. M., BALLADS AND SONGS COLLECTED BY THE MISSOURI FOLKLORE SOCIETY, University of Missouri, Columbia, 1940.

Laws, G. M., AMERICAN BALLADRY FROM BRITISH BROADSIDES, American Folklore Society, Philadelphia, 1957.

O'Lochlainn, C., IRISH STREET BALLADS, Sign of the Three Candles, Dublin, 1939.

SIDE I, Band 8: THE CUCKOO

This song is one of the finest examples of folk lyric on the theme of the inconstant lover. There is no definite story, but by the use of beautiful and highly poetic images a mood is evoked which conveys a very strong message to the listener. The words and images travel freely from song to song, so that it is impossible to say that any one of these songs is a version or variant of another. The listener will recognize stanzas found commonly in "Old Smokey", "The Wagoner's Lad", "A-walking and A-talking", and many others. The song sung here was learned from the singing of Mary Jo Davis of Fayetteville, Arkansas.

A-walking and a-talking, a-walking I'll go,
For to meet my true lover in the green valley low;
Oh, meeting's a pleasure and parting is grief,
But a false hearted lover is worse than a thief,
Oh a false hearted lover is worse than a thief.

A thief will but rob you and take what he craves,
But a false hearted lover will lead you to the grave,
In the grave you will moulder and turn to the dust,
Oh, where's there a young man that a poor girl can trust,
Oh where's there a young man that a poor girl can trust.

For they'll hug you and kiss you and tell you more lies
Than the sands on the seashore or the stars in the skies;
Go away from me Willie and leave me along,
Don't be bothering a poor girl who's a long way from home,
Don't be bothering a poor girl who's a long way from home.

The cuckoo is a pretty bird, she sings as she flies,
She brings us good tidings and she tells us no lies;
She feeds on pretty flowers to make her voice clear,
And she never cries cuckoo till the spring of the year,
And she never cries cuckoo till the spring of the year.

For additional texts and information, see:

Belden, H. M., BALLADS AND SONGS COLLECTED BY THE MISSOURI FOLKLORE SOCIETY, University of Missouri, Columbia, 1940.

Ritchie, Jean, SINGING FAMILY OF THE CUMBERLANDS, Oxford University Press, New York, 1955.

Sharp, C., ENGLISH FOLK-SONGS FROM THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIANS, Volume II, Oxford University Press, London, 1932.

SIDE II, Band 1: I'M ON MY WAY

Many of the early camp-meeting songs of southern white religious groups were of the type that could be expanded indefinitely with only the simplest extemporizing necessary. The Negro religious singer also made use of this device, even more frequently than did his white brothers. "I'm On My Way" is an excellent example of this type of song, and could have been sung by either Negro or white singers, though its contextual language would suggest a Negro source for this version. Miss O'Bryant learned this version from Bill Corday of Pittsburg, Kansas.

I'm on my way to Canaan Land,
I'm on my way to Canaan Land,
I'm on my way to Canaan Land,
I'm on my way, Great God, I'm on my way.

I'll ask my mother to go with me. (3 times)
I'm on my way, great God, I'm on my way.

If she won't go, I'll go alone, (3 times)
I'm on my way, great God, I'm on my way.

I'll ask my boss if I can go, (3 times)
I'm on my way, great God, I'm on my way.

If he says no, I'll go anyhow, (3 times)
I'm on my way, great God, I'm on my way.

I'm on my way and I won't be back, (3 times)
I'm on my way, great God, I'm on my way.

I'm on my way to Canaan Land, (3 times)
I'm on my way, great God, I'm on my way. (2 times)

For additional texts and information, see:

White, N. I., AMERICAN NEGRO FOLK-SONGS, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1928.

SIDE II, Band 2: A SAILOR'S LIFE

This song has been collected widely throughout the British Isles and America, and probably derives from broadside versions which achieved wide currency in the 19th century. Various occupational groups have adapted the song to their own trades, and there were versions sung by lumberjacks ("The Pinery Boy"), gold-miners ("California Boy"), and soldiers (A Soldier's Life). The ballad ends with stanzas which apparently have been borrowed from the widely known "The Butcher Boy", in which the grief-stricken maiden requests a pen to write a song and gives instructions on how she should be buried. This version was learned from Mary Jo Davis of Fayetteville, Arkansas.

A sailor's life is a dreary one,
It robs fair maids of their heart's delight,
It causes them to weep and to mourn
The loss of a true love that never shall return,
It causes them to weep and to mourn
The loss of a true love that never shall return.

Oh, dark is the color of my true love's hair,
His face is like a lily fair,
And on his breast he wears a star,
None can I love but my sweet sailor boy,
And on his breast he wears a star,
None can I love but my sweet sailor boy.

Oh, father, father go build me a boat,
So out on this ocean I may float,
And every ship that I pass by
There I will inquire of my sweet sailor boy,
And every ship that I pass by
There I will inquire of my sweet sailor boy.

So out on this ocean she did float,
There she passed about five boats,
And every one she did inquire,
There she did inquire of her sweet sailor boy,
And every one she did inquire,
There she did inquire of her sweet sailor boy.

She pulled her boat up on a rock,
Just like a lady when her heart is broke;
She wrung her hands, she tore her hair,
Just like a lady in deep despair,
She wrung her hands, she tore her hair,
Just like a lady in deep despair.

Go get me a chair to sit upon,
Pen and ink to write a song,
At the end of every line she dropped a tear,
At the end of every verse cried: "Oh, me dear!"
At the end of every line she dropped a tear,
At the end of every verse cried: "Oh, my dear!"

Go dig my grave both wide and deep,
Put marbles at my head and feet,
And on my breast a snow-white dove
Just to let the world know that I died for love,
And on my breast a snow-white dove,
Just to let the world know that I died for love.

For additional texts and information, see:

Laws, G. M., AMERICAN BALLADRY FROM BRITISH BROADSIDES, American Folklore Society, Philadelphia, 1957.

Belden, H. M., BALLADS AND SONGS COLLECTED BY THE MISSOURI FOLKLORE SOCIETY, University of Missouri, Columbia, 1940.

Dean-Smith, M., A GUIDE TO ENGLISH FOLK SONG COLLECTIONS, University Press of Liverpool, Liverpool, England, 1954.

SIDE II, Band 3: KEEP YOUR HAND ON THE PLOW

This is another of those religious songs that know no color line, for versions of it have been collected from both white and Negro folksingers and congregations. The gospel plow as a religious symbol appears in various white sacred songs, and it is probable that this song was originally of white creation, though the Negro has refashioned it to serve his own religious needs. This version is similar to the text appearing in the Lomax's "OUR SINGING COUNTRY" collection.

Got my hand on the gospel plow,
Wouldn't take nothin' for my journey now.

CHORUS:

Keep your hand on the plow, hold on,
Hold on, hold on,
Keep your hand on the plow, hold on.

Took Paul and Silas and put 'em in jail,
Didn't have no one to go their bail.

Paul and Silas began to shout,
Jail door opened and they walked out.

Peter he was so nice and neat,
Said he wouldn't wash Jesus' feet.

Got my hand on the gospel plow,
Wouldn't take nothin' for my journey now.

For additional texts and information, see:

White, N. I., AMERICAN NEGRO FOLK SONGS, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1928.

Sharp, C., ENGLISH FOLK-SONGS FROM THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIANS, Volume II, Oxford University Press, London, 1932.

SIDE II, Band 4: THE MAIDEN ON THE PLAINS

The pioneers of the Old West were mostly men. When a cowboy took a wife, she was expected to help him do the work necessary to live on the lonely plains. Not only did these pioneer women work with their men, but they fought side by side with them as well. This ballad tells such a story. The history of the piece has never been traced. Miss O'Bryant's version was learned from Fred High, of High, Arkansas. Mr. High has published a small booklet containing this song and 72 others which he has known most of his life.

I once knew a maiden who lived on the plains,
She helped me to herd cattle through the slow steady rains,
She helped me one season, one whole year's round-up,
She would drink red liquor from a cold bitter cup.

I learned her the cow trade, the ranger's command,
To handle a six-shooter in right or left hand;
I learned her the cow trade and never to run,
And never to fear danger or the bullets from a gun.

We camped in a canyon in the fall of the year,
We camped in a canyon with a bunch of fat steers;
The Indians came on us at the dead hours of night,
She rose from her warm bed, a battle to fight.

Then out roared the thunder and down come the rain,
Along come a bullet and crushed out her brain;
Now rise up you cowboys, let's fight for her life,
For these wretched redskins have murdered my wife.

For additional texts and information, see:

High, F., OLD, OLD FOLK SONGS, Berryville, Arkansas, n.d.

Laws, M. G., NATIVE AMERICAN BALLADRY, American Folklore Society, Philadelphia, 1950.

Randolph, V., OZARK FOLKSONGS, Volume II, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, 1946.

SIDE II, Band 5: A SOLDIER'S WIFE

This ballad appears to be a corrupted or secondary form to the ballads of "Earl Brand" (Child #7) and "Erlinton" (Child #8), bearing close resemblance to the central theme of those ballads, but it should perhaps be counted as a distinct ballad for it has maintained its own identity intact for more than 300 years. Certainly in temper it is separate from the two ballads mentioned. In its present form, the ballad goes back to early British broadsides, and it is indeed possible that the broadside scribes of the 17th century found the ending of the ballad of "Earl Brand" too sad for their tastes, and changed the ending (not far removed from that of "Erlinton") to a happy and even impertinent one. In this form the ballad has been collected frequently and widely dispersed throughout America. This version was learned from the singing of Mrs. Miner Griffin of Conway, Arkansas.

In Knoxville City, I've often heard them say,
There lived a valiant lady, all bold and so gay;
Her riches were so great, they had never yet been told,
And she loved a valiant soldier because he was so bold.

She wrote him a letter and quickly to him sent,
And when he received it to meet her he went;
He waived his sword and pistol and he swung them by
his side,
And swore they would be married no matter what betide.

They married but ere they returned home again,
They met her aged father and seven armed men,
Saying: "Daughter, oh daughter, you are a soldier's
wife,
It's in this lonely valley I intend to end your life."

"Oh," said the soldier, "I'll try you for that."
Which caused him to lay off his coat and his hat;
He waived his sword and pistol and caused them to
rattle,
And the lady held his horses while he safely fought
the battle.

The first one he came to, he laid him on the plain,
The next one he came to, he done him up the same,
"Let's run," said the others, "or surely we'll be
slain,
For to fight a valiant soldier, we find it all in
vain."

"Give o'er, give o'er," the old man cried,
"You shall have my daughter, 500 pounds beside,"
"Fight on," said the lady, "your fortune is but
small,
Then give over, dearest soldier, and you shall have
it all."

Come all you fair ladies, take warning by me,
And never slight a soldier of any degree;
A soldier is a gentleman, so darling and so gay,
So manfully he fights for his life and liberty.

For additional texts and information, see:

Belden, H. M., BALLADS AND SONGS COLLECTED BY THE
MISSOURI FOLKLORE SOCIETY, University of Missouri,
Columbia, 1940.

Coffin, T. P., THE BRITISH TRADITIONAL BALLAD IN
NORTH AMERICA, American Folklore Society, Philadelphia,
1950.

THE FRANK C. BROWN COLLECTION OF NORTH CAROLINA FOLK-
LORE, Volume II, edited by H. M. Belden and A. P.
Hudson, Duke University Press, Durham, 1952.

SIDE II, Band 6: MARBLE TOWN

This plaintive song is another fine example of folk
love lyric. Here, too, the song has no fixed form
and occasionally one finds verses from "Careless
Love" and other love songs appended to it. The
expression "Marble Town", while appearing to be the
name of some city to which the sad lover is departing,
is probably a euphemism for the graveyard (that is,
marble gravestones.) This version was learned from
Jared Reed, presently in New York.

True love don't weep, true love don't mourn,
True love don't weep, true love don't mourn,
True love don't weep or mourn for me
I'm going away to Marble Town.

Every night when the sun goes in,
Every night when the sun goes in,
Every night when the sun goes in,
I hang my head and mournful cry.

I wish to God my baby was born,
And settin' on his pappy's knees,
And me, poor girl, was dead and gone,
Green grass growing over me.

True love don't weep, true love don't mourn.....

For additional texts and information, see:

Sharp, C., ENGLISH FOLK-SONGS FROM THE SOUTHERN
APPALACHIANS, Volume II, Oxford University Press,
London, 1932.

Kolb, S. & J., A TREASURY OF FOLK SONGS, Bantam
Books, New York, 1948.

SIDE II, Band 7: THE TEXAS RANGERS

Most versions of this ballad (and the version sung
here) would seem to suggest that this ballad describes
a fight between the Texas Rangers and Indians. H. M.
Belden believed that this song is "surely an echo of
the great fight at the Alamo on March 6, 1835." This
conclusion probably derived from some version of the
ballad in which Indians are replaced by Mexicans, or
are merely referred to as "the enemy." In several
southern versions, the enemy becomes Yankees, and the
ballad is transformed into a Civil War song. It is
more than likely, however, that the original text
referred to Indians, for the main function of the
Texas Rangers was to protect settlers from Indians,
though later they dealt with local badmen as well.

The ballad has been popular with folksingers in every
section of the United States. This version was
learned from the singing of an old Arkansas woman,
Mrs. Skaggs.

Come all you Texas Rangers, wherever you may be,
I'll tell you of some trouble that happened unto me;
My name is nothing extree, and it I will not tell,
But all you Texas Rangers, I'm sure I wish you well.

'Twas at the age of fifteen, I joined the jolly band,
We marched from San Antonio to the Rio Grande;
Our Captain he informed us, I'm sure he thought it
right,
Before we reached the station that we must have a
fight.

I saw the smoke ascending, it seemed to reach the sky,
The first thought that struck me, this is my time
to die;
I saw the Indians coming, I up and give a yell,
The fear I felt within me, no human tongue can tell.

I saw their glittering lances, the bullets fell like
hail,
My heart it sank within me, my courage almost failed,
When the bugle sounded, the captain gave command,
To arms, to arms, he shouted and by your horses stand.

We fought them for one hour before the strife was o'er,
And the like of dead and wounded, I never saw before;
Five of our gallant Rangers that served out in the West
Was buried by their comrades, I hope they are at rest.

I thought then of my mother, in tears to hear her say,
"They are all strangers to you, with me you'd better
stay."

Maybe you've got a mother, likewise a sister, too,
Maybe you got a true love, she'll weep and mourn for
you.

For additional texts and information, see:

Belden, H. M., BALLADS AND SONGS COLLECTED BY THE
MISSOURI FOLKLORE SOCIETY, University of Missouri,
Columbia, 1940.

Laws, M. G., NATIVE AMERICAN BALLADRY, American Folk-
lore Society, Philadelphia, 1950.

SIDE II, Band 8: TOM SHERMAN'S BARROOM

This ballad is but one of a long line of ballads which
have ultimately been derived from the British broad-
side ballad of "The Unfortunate Rake". In the original
ballad, a soldier, dying of syphilis, requests a
military funeral, saying:

"Muffle your drums, play your pipes merrily,
Play the dead march as you go along,
And fire your guns right over my coffin,
There goes an unfortunate lad to his home."

All later versions of the ballad have continued to use
some variant of this "deadmarch" theme and is the
single most familiar item in all related pieces.

The ballad may well have been Irish originally, for
the earliest known text is reported to have been
"sung in Cork about the year 1790." Versions have
since been collected in which various occupational
groups have made their own adaptations; cowboys,
lumberjacks, soldiers, sailors, and gamblers, have
all had a hand in claiming the song as their own.
There are also various versions in which the sex of
the dying person is changed, and the song becomes a
"Bad Girl's Lament."

The version sung here is a cowboy's lament, and
listeners will recognize it as an interesting variant
of "The Streets of Laredo." This version was learned
from Mary Jo Davis, of Fayetteville. Arkansas.

As I passed Tom Sherman's barroom
Tom Sherman's barroom so early one morn,
I saw a young cowboy all dressed in white linen,
All dressed in white linen, all dressed for the grave.

Once in the saddle I used to go dashing,
Once in the saddle I used to be gay,
I first took to drinking and then took to gambling,
Got shot in the breast and I'm dying today.

Go bear this news to my grey-headed mother,
Go bear this news to my sister so dear,
But there is another more dearer than mother,
I know that she'll grieve when she knows I am here.

Go beat the drums slowly and play the fife lowly,
Play the dead march as you carry me along;
Take me down to the graveyard and lay the sod o'er me,
For I'm a young cowboy and I know I've done wrong.

Go bring to me a cup of cold water,
A cup of cold water, he feebly said,
But e'er I returned with a cup of cold water,
The Spirit had left him and the cowboy was dead.

For additional texts and information, see:

Laws, G. M., NATIVE AMERICAN BALLADRY, American Folk-
lore Society, Philadelphia, 1950.

Belden, H. M., BALLADS AND SONGS COLLECTED BY THE
MISSOURI FOLKLORE SOCIETY, University of Missouri,
Columbia, 1940.

Lodewick, K., "The Unfortunate Rake and His Descend-
ants", WESTERN FOLKLORE, Volume XIV, Number 2, April
1955.