THE UNFORTUNATE RAKE
(St. James Hospital) Edited by Kenneth S. Goldstein  FOLKWAYS RECORDS FS 3805

THE UNFORTUNATE RAKE/A. L. Lloyd
THE TROOPER CUT DOWN IN HIS PRIME/Ewan MacColl
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THE UNFORTUNATE RAKE
A STUDY IN THE EVOLUTION OF A BALLAD

NOTES BY KENNETH S. GOLDSTEIN

It is, perhaps, a bitter historical irony, that the "St. James Hospital" which provides the setting for this series of ballads is known today in London as St. James Palace, the home of the "Court of St. James." The original St. James Hospital was a religious foundation for the redemption of "fourteen sisters, maids, that were leperous, living chastely and honestly in divine service." Now known as St. James Park, the grounds on which the palace stood was acquired by Henry VIII in 1532. During the whole reign of George III, the royal court was held at St. James.

A contemporary says that the palace "looked more like a prison than a royal residence." The palace evoked in one observer a mood which paralleled the spirit of the times, one of "terrible drama...some deep tragedy...some gall...with a transient light like that which at times glides for a moment the fierce black waves breaking over a stranded ship."

"Palace life was a frequent subject for popular comment. "Ballards swarmed as abundantly as caricatures are swarming at present," wrote Lady Louisa Stuart, "and were struck off almost as hastily, whenever wit and humor or malice and curiosity found them a theme to fasten upon. A ballad was sure to follow every incident that had a ludicrous corner from "A woful chrestening late there did In James's house befall, and the King's turning his son and daughter out of doors after it, down to a lady's dropping her shoe in the Park."

Jonathan Swift wrote about the palace in his "Journal to Stella" in a chapter called "History of the Maids of Honour since Harry the Eighth": "Houses of amusements abounded...bubbing and drinking under the trees: two or three quarrels every week. It was grown scandalous and insufferable."

The Mall in St. James Park continued to be the most fashionable promenade in London as late as the middle of the 18th century.

In recent years great interest has been directed at the old Anglo-Irish homiletic ballad of "The Unfortunate Rake", and its numerous progeny. An increasing number of folksong and ballad teachers and lecturers have used this ballad, in its many versions and variational forms, as a classroom device for explaining the process of tradition, which is necessarily the core of all understanding of that fascinating cultural phenomena known as FOLKSONG. A large part of the credit for such classroom demonstrations must be given to the phonograph recordings industry (and especially those small and medium size companies specializing in folk music recordings) for making available in ever increasing numbers excellent sound recordings of different forms of this ballad which may be heard by classroom audiences, and which aid in arriving at a better understanding of transmissional changes (and parody) in the oral dissemination of ballads and songs.

In producing, editing and annotating this album of 20 different versional and variational forms of the "Rake" cycle of ballads, I have attempted to bring together in one easily accessible recording sufficient materials to facilitate the use of this ballad cycle as a demonstration tool for classroom work. I believe the instructor or listener will find in this recording enough materials to remove the problem of his having to go to some half dozen (or more) different recordings from which to make his selection. The introductory notes, and head-notes to each of the recorded ballads have been designed to give that minimum amount of information necessary to supplement the recordings, avoiding, as much as possible, long-winded theorizing and discussion. A selected bibliography of important articles containing references to numerous texts will be found at the end of this booklet, and may be referred to by those wishing to pursue the subject further than this album. It is obvious from the wealth of material available that an extended monograph on this ballad cycle is long overdue; perhaps some graduate student of folklore will soon undertake such a study in partial fulfillment of an advanced degree. We shall all be the richer for it.

SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The oldest text we can find for any member of the "Rake" cycle of songs was not published until 1599, though it had been collected in 1532 in County Cork, Ireland, from a singer who had learned it in Dublin in 1750. The singer, according to Patrick W. Joyce, could remember only a single chorus, calling it "My Jewel, My Joy".

"My jewel, my joy, don't trouble me with the drum, Sound the dead march as my corpse goes along; And over my body, furnish this clothe, And let them all know that I'm going to my rest."

The song may well have been in tradition for a long time before the singer learned it, but any attempt to date it earlier is pure conjecture.

The earliest complete texts appear to be those printed on various 19th century broadsides from England and Ireland (See Side One, Band 1 for a 19th century broadside version). The distinguishing feature of these texts is the military funeral requested by the dying young man, a feature found in all versions and variant forms of the "Rake" ballads. It appears safe to deduce from this factor, that the dying young man, though not described specifically in this way, was a member of one of the military forces. Later texts reported from tradition seem to bear this out, for specific mention is made in several of them of "the Young Trooper" or "The Young Sailor" cut down in his prime (See Side One, Band 2 and 3). The early broadside texts are rather explicit in their mentioning the cause of the young man's death -- some venereal disease. The situation is stated rather clearly: "Bad she but told me when she disordered me, Bad she but told me of it in time, I might have got salts and pills of white mercury, But now I'm cut down in the height of my prime."

Later texts have rarely been as frank; usually the cause of death is not mentioned, or have been rationalised to less degrading, but more violent, forms of death.

Somewhere along the chain of oral transmission (probably during the 19th century), some singer reversed the sexes of the main characters. The dying person is a "Young Girl Cut Down in Her Prime", and her malefactor is a young man (See Side One, Bands 5, 6, 7 and 8). In this form, the ballad has been reported with greater frequency than any other, excepting of course, for the later cowboy adaptations.

Whereas the earlier forms of the "Rake" ballad discussed above have all been reported rather frequently from Old World sources, only variant forms of "The Bad Girl's Lament" have been reported in the New World. Undoubtedly, however, the other forms were also known at one time, but were crowded out of the picture by the popularity of a western recension of the "Rake" theme. It appears impossible at this late date to trace the line of descent of Cowboy variants; we can only guess that some frontiersman brought a version of either the older "Rake" ballad, or its sister
mutation, "The Bad Girl's Lament", to the West where it was readily adapted to the frontier situation (For Western variants, see Side One, Bands 9 and 10, and Side Two, Band 1). Though never specifically stated, we may deduce that the cowboy meets his violent end as a result of drinking and gambling which lead to an argument over cheating at cards, and his eventual death from 'lead-poisoning'.

To this point, the changes that have taken place may be viewed as mutational, that is, changes of an abrupt or major nature, utilizing more than mere substitution, as in changes of a simple parody type. Tradition itself is relatively conservative; most changes, resulting from accidents of hearing, misunderstanding, and loss of memory, are, in their individual acts, only slight changes, frequently cancelling and correcting each other over a period of time. Major, or mutational changes, are caused by more creative forces -- such as the desire for more dramatic effects, tendencies toward localization and rationalization of old motifs and settings, and invention of new story matter. Of an entirely different order, though also creative in its functioning, are those changes produced by parody. This consists of simple substitution of words and phrases in a more or less standardized text.

The occupational and topological versions of the "Rake" ballads appear to be mostly on the order of parodies -- specifically, parodies of the "The Cowboy's Lament". Thus, hard-rock miners (Side Two, Band 3), telephone linemen (Side Two, Band 4), lumberjacks (Side Two, Band 5), skiers (Side Two, Band 6), longshoreman (Side Two, Band 7), trade-unionists (Side Two, Band 8), and students (Side Two, Bands 9 and 10) have all tried their hands at the delightful art of parody. Occasionally such changes go beyond simple parody, and additional story matter is introduced (See Side Two, Bands 7, 8 and 9).

One remaining version remains to be considered. And here too the chain of descent has been obscured. "Gambler's Blues" (Side Two, Band 2), a popular Negro jazz song, has close affinities to the "Rake" cycle of ballads in thematic content, and appears to have even borrowed several stanzas from the older ballad, but it tells its story uniquely. Two distinct ballads may have crossed paths in a honky-tonk nitespot early in the 20th century, resulting in a fusion of elements from both. Or, we may be dealing with a mutational version, deriving directly from some older form of the "Rake" ballad, probably "The Bad Girl's Lament".

One additional point seems appropriate here. Several ballads outside of the "Rake" cycle have occasionally borrowed stanzas from it. The stanza most frequently borrowed is an appropriate variant of the funeral request stanza found in all "Rake" descendents. Thus, in versions of "The Rambling Boy" (also known as "Wild and Wicked Youth", "The Flash Lad", "Newry Town", and "The Robber", among others), the dying robber asks for fellow highwaymen to carry his coffin:

"Now I'm dead, going to my grave, Get six sweet damsels my shroud to weave, Get six highwaymen to carry me, Give them bright swords and sweet liberty." (From "Polksongs from Martha's Vineyard", to the sung by E. O. Huntting (Folkways Records PA 2032) under the title "Scarlet Town", Side 1, Band 6.)

In most variants of the 19th century British sentimental sea song "Tarpaulin Jacket", the dying sailor asks for his shipmates to carry his coffin. In a whaling variant, he asks for 'boatsteerers' (harpooners) to do the job:

"Wrap me up in my tarpaulin jacket, And say a poor sailor lies low, Let six boatsteerers carry me With a step that is mournful and slow." (From "Polksongs from Martha's Vineyard" (see above), Side 2, Band 2.)

Though no text from the "Rake" family of ballads has yet been reported from Australia, there is a widely known deathbed piece, "The Dying Stockman", in which the dying man requests a funeral befitting his station:

"Wrap me up with my stockwhip and blanket, And bury me deep down below, Where the dingoes and crows can't molest me In the shade where the coolibahs grow." (From Australian "Polksongs and Ballads", sung by John Greenway (Folkways Records PW 6718), Side 1, Band 3)

In this last mentioned ballad we are dealing with what appears to be a parody of a 'second-cousin' to the "Rake". The exact relationship of the above mentioned pieces to the "Rake" cycle is uncertain, but should present exciting material for a study of borrowing in traditional songs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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K.B.G.

SIDE I, Band 1: THE UNFORTUNATE RAKE
(Sung by A.L. LLOYD) Time: 2:51

This 19th century broadside text may not be the grand-daddy of all later versions of the much travelled "Rake" cycle, but it is probably sufficiently close enough to the original ballad to warrant its use as a starting point for an examination of the whole family of related parodies and recensions.

Only a handful of texts reported from tradition have been as graphically frank in their commentary on the cause of the young man's demise as that given in this early version. Later texts have tended to treat the matter obliquely, or have rationalized the situation by having death caused by other, usually more violent, means.

This recording may also be heard as part of an album of English Street Songs (Riverside HLP 12-614), sung by A.L. Lloyd, with concertina accompaniments by Alf Edwards, and is reproduced here with the permission of Riverside Records.

THE UNFORTUNATE RAKE

As I was a-walking down by St. James' Hospital, I was a-walking down by there one day, What should I spy but one of my comrades All wrapped up in flannel though warm was the day.

I asked him what ailed him, I asked him what failed him, I asked him the cause of all his complaint. 'Tis all on account of some handsome young woman, She that has caused me to weep and lament.

'And had she but told me before she disordered me, Had she but told me of it in time, I might have got pills and salts of white mercury, But now I'm cut down in the height of my prime.

'Get six young soldiers to carry my coffin, Six young girls to sing me a song, And each of them carry a bunch of green laurel So they don't smell me as they bear me along.

'Don't muffle your drums and play your rifles merrily, Play a quick march as you carry me along, And fire your bright muskets all over my coffin, Saying: There goes an unfortunate lad to his home.'

SIDE I, Band 2: THE TROOPER CUT DOWN IN HIS PRIME
(Sung by Ewan MacColl) Time: 4:26

This British soldier's variant of the "Rake" ballad is reported as "...probably the oldest of British barrack-room favorites." Old army regulars claim that the song originated in the first expeditionary force sent to France during World War I, but it was likewise known among soldiers during the Boer War, as evidenced by MacColl's having heard an almost
identical version sung by a ninety-year old actor, Norman Partridge, dating from the South African campaigns.

The trooper's death results from his consorting with "flash-girls", an oblique reference to death from venereal disease, though such "disordering" is not itself mentioned.

This recording may also be heard as part of an album of British soldier's songs, entitled Bless 'Em All (Riverside RLP 12-642), sung by Ewan MacColl, and is reproduced here with the permission of Riverside Records. Guitar accompaniment for this number is supplied by Peggy Seeger.

THE TROOPER CUT DOWN IN HIS PRIME

As I was a-walkin' down by the Royal Arsenal, Early the morning though warm was the day, When who should I see but one of my comrades, All wrapped up in flannel, and cold as the clay.

CHORUS:
Then beat the drum slowly and play your fife slowly, And sound the dead march as you carry me along; And fire your bundooksl right over the head, For I'm a young trooper cut down in my prime.

The bugles were playin'; his mates were a-prayin', The chaplain was kneelin' down by his bed; His poor head was aching, his poor heart was breakin', This poor young trooper cut down in his prime.

CHORUS:
Get six of my comrades to carry my coffin, Six of my comrades to carry me on high; And six young maidens to carry white roses, So they won't smell me as they pass me by.

CHORUS:
Outside of the barracks you will find two girls standin', And one to the other she whispered and said: "Here comes the young swaddy's whose money we squandered, Here comes the young trooper cut down in his prime."

CHORUS:
On the cross by his grave you will find these words written: "All you young troopers take warnin' by me; Keep away from them flash-girls who walk in the city; Flash-girls of the city have quite ruined me."

CHORUS:

2swaddy - English slang for soldier
3flash-girls - street girls (probably prostitutes)

SIDE I, Band 3: THE YOUNG SAILOR CUT DOWN IN HIS PRIME (Sung by Harry Cox) Time: 1:53

The setting has changed only slightly, and the young dissipator of this version is a sailor, but the close relationship of this text to the one above is obvious. Here, too, "flash-girls" appear to be the cause of the young man's demise, though not as clearly stated as in the case of the trooper in the previous ballad.

Harry Cox, famous septuagenarian folk singer from Norfolk, England, has recorded more than 50 songs from his huge repertory for the B.B.C. archives. This recording of his singing was made by the noted English collector, Peter Kennedy. For an article on Harry Cox, and several of his songs see the Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, Volume VIII, No. 3, December 1958, pp. 142-155.

This recording may also be heard as part of the album Field Trip - England (Polkeways PW 5071), edited by Jean Ritchie.

THE YOUNG SAILOR CUT DOWN IN HIS PRIME

As I was a-walking down by the Royal Albert, Black was the night and cold was the day; Who should I see but one of my shipmates, Wrapped in a blanket far colder than clay.

He asked for a blanket to wrap round his head, Likewise a candle to light him to bed; His poor heart was breakin', his poor head was aching, For he's a young sailor cut down in his prime.

We'll beat the big drums and we'll play the pipes merrily, Play the dead march as we carry him along, Take him to the churchyard and fire three volleys o'er him For he's a young sailor cut down in his prime.

At the corner of the street you will see two girls standing, One to the other did whisper and say: "Here comes a young sailor who's money we'll squander, Here comes a young sailor cut down in his prime."

His kind-hearted mother, his kind-hearted father, Both of them wondered about his past life, For along with the flash-girls he would wander, Along with the flash-girls it was his delight.

SIDE I, Band 4: NO I'M A YOUNG MAN CUT DOWN IN MY PRIME (Sung by Willie Mathieson) Time 2:16

When the "Rake" crossed the border to Scotland, his sad tale underwent few changes. There is little, if any, suggestion of a military funeral (the pipes reference in a Scottish context could well mean the bagpipes, used at both civilian and military affairs). The young man's death is still obviously due to his association with members of the fairer sex.

Willie Mathieson, who recorded this version in 1952 at the age of 72, spent almost his entire life working as a farm servant in the Northeastern Scottish counties of Aberdeen and Banff. Upon his death in 1958, Mathieson's legacy to folklore included not only his own extensive oral repertoire of folksong but a manuscript collection of 345 songs written down in 3 huge ledgers as he heard them through the years, beginning as a schoolboy and continuing in the bothies, chaumiers and farm kitchens where he fed as a farm servant. He first heard this version of the Unfortunate Rake from John Innes, farm servant and 'second horseman' at the farm of 'Boghead', Dunlugas, Banffshire, in the winter of 1933.

This recording was made by the noted Scots poet and folklorist, Hamish Henderson, for The School of Scottish Studies archives, on a field trip in February, 1952.

NOO I'M A YOUNG MAN CUT DOWN IN MY PRIME

As I was a-walking one bright summer morning, As I was a-walking one bright summer day, Its who did I spy but one of my comrades, Rolled up in white flannel and cauler than clay.

CHORUS:
O love, it is cruel, cruel to deceive me, Why didn't you tell me your sorrow in time? My heart is a-breaking, my heart is a-breaking, Noo, I'm a young man cut down in my prime.

CHORUS:
I have an aged father, likewise a mother, Oft times they did tell me it would ruin me quick, I never did believe them, I always did deceive them, And still with the city girls I spent all my time.

CHORUS:
Go send for my mother to wash and to dress me, Go send for my sister to comb my black hair; Go send for my brother to play the pipes slowly, And play the dead march as they carry me along.

CHORUS:
There's a bunch of roses to lay on my coffin, There's a bunch of roses for my head and my feet, There's a bunch of roses to lay in the churchyard, To perfume the way as they carry me along.

At the gate of the churchyard two girilledes were standing, The one to the other in a whisper did say:
"Here comes the young man whose money we have squandered,
And noo they have laid him down in his cauld grave.

(CHORUS)

SIDE I, Band 5: THE BAD GIRL'S LAMENT
(Sung by Wade Hemsworth) Time: 2:49

The transformation from a ballad of a misguided male 'rake' (soldier or Sailor) to that of a young girl 'gone wrong' is not as simple as one might suspect; more than a mere change of sex has been made. In each of the three ballads above the burial ceremony requested by the young man is a totally military one, and no request is made for death-bed visitors. In each of the four 'bad girl' versions given here, the death march is more conventional, though still retaining military overtones, and death-bed communicants (preacher, doctor, lover, and parents) are asked for.

This variant of The Bad Girl's Lament, sung by Wade Hemsworth as learned by him in the Canadian North Woods (Northern Ontario and Quebec), is closely related to early texts reported in the Canadian Maritimes and Maine.

This recording may also be heard as part of an album of Folk Songs of the Canadian North Woods (Folkways FW 3831), sung by Wade Hemsworth accompanying himself on guitar.

THE BAD GIRL'S LAMENT

As I walked down to St James' Hospital, St James Hospital early one day, I spied my only fairest daughter Wrapped up in white linen as cold as the clay.

(CHORUS)

So beat your drums and play the fife lowly, And play the dead march as you carry me along; Take me to the churchyard and lay the sod over me, I am a young maid and I know I've done wrong. Once in the street I used to look handsome; Once in the street I used to dress gay; First to the ale house, then to the dance hall Then to the poor house and now to my grave.

(CHORUS)

Send for the preacher to pray o'er my body, Send for the doctor to heal up my wounds, Send for the young man I first fell in love with, That I might see him before I pass on.

(CHORUS)

Let six pretty maidens with a bunch of red roses, Six pretty maidens to sing me a song, Six pretty maidens with a bunch of red roses To lay on my coffin as they carry me along.

(CHORUS)

SIDE I, Band 6: ONE MORNING IN MAY
(Sung by Hally Wood) Time: 2:33

Variants of The Bad Girl's Lament in which venereal disease is mentioned or even hinted at as the cause of the young woman's demise are extremely rare.

Herbert Halpert collected a unique text in New Jersey in which specific mention is made of the girl's suffering from 'blue bores' (venereal chancres), and two texts (including the one referred to above) in which mercury is mentioned as a possible curative aid for the disease.

In the Virginia variant sung here, and the Virginia Islands one which follows, a venereal disease is hinted at by use of the terms 'salivated' and 'salvation'. Ointments of metallic mercury have been used in past times as a cure for syphilis, and one of the results of such curative attempts is an excessive flow of saliva on the part of the patient. Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary gives as a definition for 'salivation': "An abnormally increased secretion and flow of saliva, especially when due to the effects of drugs, as mercury."

Hally Wood learned this variant from the Library of Congress recording of Mrs. Texas Gladhen, of Salem, Virginia, collected by Alan & Elizabeth Lomax in 1941. Mrs. Gladhen's singing of this ballad may be heard on a recording of Anglo-American Ballads from the Archive of American Folk Song (AAFS 11) issued by the recording laboratory of the Music Division of the Library of Congress. This recording may also be heard as part of the album 2: Lovely Appearance of Death (Elektra EKL-10), sung by Hally Wood, and is reproduced here with the permission of Elektra Records.

ONE MORNING IN MAY

When I was a young girl I used to seek pleasure, When I was a young girl I used to drink ale; Right out of the alehouse and into the jailhouse, Out of a barroom and down to my grave.

Come Papa, come Mama, and sit you down by me, Come sit you down by me and pity my case; My poor head is aching, my sad heart is breaking, My body's salivated and I'm bound to die.

Go send for the preacher to come and pray for me; Go send for the doctor to heal up my wounds; My poor head is aching, my sad heart is breaking, My body's salivated, and Hell is my doom.

I want four young ladies to bear up my coffin, I want three young maidens to carry me on, And each of them carry a bunch of wild roses, To lay on my body as I pass along.

One morning, one morning, one morning in May, I spied this young lady all clad in white linen, All clad in white linen and cold as the clay.

SIDE I, Band 7: BRIGHT SUMMER MORNING
(Sung by Mrs. Viola Penn) Time: 2:22

This West Indian Negro variant of The Bad Girl's Lament probably came to the Virgin Islands from British colonizers during the 19th century, when, for a short time, England took over control of the Islands from Denmark.

This version, sung by Mrs. Viola Penn to her own guitar accompaniment, was collected by Van Dam and T. Cowbe on St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, in November, 1953.

BRIGHT SUMMER MORNING

One bright summer morning as I were a-walking, One bright summer morning as I were a-walk, Whoa! - a young man and a fair darling maiden, She was wrapped up in flannel, as cold as could be. She was wrapped up in flannel, as cold as could be.

O come, dearest mother, and sit down beside me, O come, dearest mother, and pity my crime, For my poor heart is breakin', my poor head is bendin', For I'm deep in salvation1 and surely I must die, For I'm deep in salvation and surely I must die.

Do send for the young man that first introduced2 me, Do send for the young man that put me in pain, Do send for the doctor, although it is too late, For I am a young girl cut down in my prime. For I am a young girl cut down in my prime.

Six jolly young sailors to carry my coffin, Six jolly young ladies to walk by my side, With a bunch of green roses to place on my coffin, That the people might smell me while passing along.

1salvation - see headnote to Side I, Band 5 (One Morning in May).
2introduced - this is probably a misunderstanding or corruption of seduced.

SIDE I, Band 8: THE GIRL IN THE DILGER CASE
(Sung by D.K. Wilgus) Time: 1:05

This Kentucky variant of The Bad Girl's Lament appears to have been adapted to fit the circumstances of a local incident. The exact relationship of the young prostitute of the ballad to the Dilger referred to in its title is unclear. Wilgus supplied the following information with the text: "Dilger had been a policeman and a bawd in a low class variety theatre. He was a husky, virile, rather good-looking chap of about 35. He was surprised in a bawdy house by two policemen. He killed them both and was subsequently executed for the crime."
The text sung here was collected by S.C. Perrow from Jack Sykes of Louisville, Kentucky, in 1915, and is presently part of the Western Kentucky Folklore Archive. Dr. Wilgus has set the text to a conventional tune for ballads in the 'Rake' cycle.

**THE GIRL IN THE DELGER CASE**

Once I was young and sweet as the roses; Out on the street so gaudy and gay. I went first to the dance hall, from there to the whore house, And now from the whore house I go to my grave.

Send for my mother to sit by my bedside, Send for the preacher to pray over me, Send for the doctor that heals me so easy, Send for the young man that I like to see.

The Ninth Street girls will carry my coffin, The Eighth Street walkers will sing a sweet song; Give them each a bunch of red roses To keep me from smell as they carry me along.

The western pioneer and the cowboy readily adapted the 'Rake' ballad to their own needs. The setting is a western town, and the unfortunate hero dies of lead poisoning rather than syphilis. Gambling and drinking are contributory factors to his murder. The cowboy calls for his pardners to hear his sad story, and then asks for a funeral ceremony, changed only slightly from that of the overseas ancestors of this ballad.

The version sung here by Bruce Buckley was collected by Vance Randolph from Jim Fitzhugh of Sylamore, Arkansas, in 1919.

**THE COWBOY'S LAMENT**

As I rode out in the streets of Loredo, As I rode in the streets of Old Loredo town, I spied a poor cowboy all wrapped in white linen, All wrapped in white linen for they had ginned him down.

Oh, I see by your outfit you are a cowpuncher, This poor boy says as I boldy step by. Come sit down beside me, my story I'll tell you, Cause I'm a poor cowboy and I'm going to die.

Well, I was born in Southeast Texas, Where the Jimson weed and the lilac does bloom; I went to go live there for to go far a-rangin', And I've tried from Canada down to old Mexico.

Twas once in the saddle I used to go dashing, Twa's once in the saddle I used to go gay; Twa's first down to the drum house and then down to Maisy's, I've shot in the breast and I'm dying today.

Well, go write a letter to my grey-haired mother, Go then me a note to my sister so dear, But there is another more dear than a mother, Who'll bitterly weep when she knows that I'm hurt.

"Get sixteen cowboys to carry my coffin, Get sixteen pretty ladies to bear up my pall, Put roses all over the top of my coffin To deaden the smell as they bear me along. "Oh, swing the rope slowly and ring your spurs lowly, And play the dead march as you bear me along; Take me to the green valley, there lay the sod o'er me 'Cause I'm a poor cowboy and I know I've done wrong.

**SIDE I, Band 8: THE COWBOY'S LAMENT**

(Sung by Bruce Buckley) Time: 2:36

The version sung here by Bruce Buckley was collected by Vance Randolph from Jim Fitzhugh of Sylamore, Arkansas, in 1919.

**THE COWBOY'S LAMENT**

As I rode out in the streets of Loredo, As I rode in the streets of Old Loredo town, I spied a poor cowboy all wrapped in white linen, All wrapped in white linen for they had ginned him down.

Oh, I see by your outfit you are a cowpuncher, This poor boy says as I boldly step by. Come sit down beside me, my story I'll tell you, Cause I'm a poor cowboy and I'm going to die.

Well, I was born in Southeast Texas, Where the Jimson weed and the lilac does bloom; I went to go live there for to go far a-rangin', And I've tried from Canada down to old Mexico.

Twas once in the saddle I used to go dashing, Twa's once in the saddle I used to go gay; Twa's first down to the drum house and then down to Maisy's, I've shot in the breast and I'm dying today.

Well, go write a letter to my grey-haired mother, Go then me a note to my sister so dear, But there is another more dear than a mother, Who'll bitterly weep when she knows that I'm hurt.

"Get sixteen cowboys to carry my coffin, Get sixteen pretty ladies to bear up my pall, Put roses all over the top of my coffin To deaden the smell as they bear me along. "Oh, swing the rope slowly and ring your spurs lowly, And play the dead march as you bear me along; Take me to the green valley, there lay the sod o'er me 'Cause I'm a poor cowboy and I know I've done wrong.

**SIDE II, Band 1: ST. JAMES HOSPITAL**

(Sung by Alan Lomax) Time: 3:31

This Negro version from Texas is ostensibly a cowboy ballad, but it should probably be considered a unique form of the 'Rake' ballad, separate and distinct from the 'Streets of Loredo' variants. An examination of the text reveals traces of earlier forms of the ballad not usually found in the more common cowboy versions. The setting is the St. James Hospital of British broadside texts (or, perhaps that of the popular Jazz song, "Gambler's Blues, for which see Side II, Band 2); the dying man calls for his parents to sit with him, and complains of various aches and a broken heart, elements found most frequently in versions of The Bad Girl's Lament. The tune, too, is a fascinating combination of old and modern elements. As Alan Lomax has noted, it "...is closer to the old folk settings than one usually finds in the west. At the same time (the) melody is closely related to the later St. James Infirmary Blues (Gambler's Blues) and provides the link between the folk ballad and the pop tune."

John and Alan Lomax collected this version from James (Iron Head) Baker in 1934 at the Central State Farm, Sugarland, Texas. The present recording by Alan Lomax may also be heard as part of his album of Texas Folksongs (Tradition TLP 1029), and is reproduced here with the permission of Tradion Records.

**ST. JAMES HOSPITAL**

It was early one morning I passed St. James Hospital, It was early one mornin', mornin' month of May, I looked in the window and I spied dear cowboy-- Wrapped up in white linen, well, he was cold as the clay.

SAYIN', "Come, dear mother, come an' seat yourself nigh me, Come, dear father, come and sing me one song, For my knees-bones are achin' and my poor heart is breakin', I know I'm a poor cowboy, and I know I done wrong.

I want sixteen young gamblers, papa, to carry my coffin, I want sixteen young whores gal's for to sing me my song, Tell them bring 'long a bunch of those sweet-smellin' roses, So they can't smell me as they drive me on.
'Twas once in the saddle, papa, I used to go dashing, Father, in my young days when I used to be gay, Down round' that old church-house, with them handsome young ladies, Them girls oughta carry me, follow me to my grave.

It was early one mornin' I passed St. James Hospital, Lord, it was early one mornin', mornin' month of May, I looked upon the window and I spied a dear cowboy, And he was wrapped in white linen, he was colder than clay.

This ballad should perhaps be considered separate and distinct from the 'Rake' cycle, for aside from its obvious borrowing of the funeral request stanzas, its tale is told in a unique manner, not found in any of the 'Rake' ballads considered previously. Some text may yet be recovered which will prove to be the 'missing link' between the 'Gambler's Blues' and some older form of the ballad, most probably 'The Young Girl Cut Down In Her Prime' to which the present ballad has some affinity.

According to jazz scholars and discographers with whom I have spoken, 'Gambler's Blues' was first recorded in the 1920s, and has since become a standard blues and jazz instrumental and vocal number. These experts are unanimous in their belief that the ballad does not trace back to earlier than 1910.

Dave Van Ronk's version of 'Gambler's Blues' is a rather 'typical' one, and was learned by him over a number of years from various recordings he has heard, as well as from live jazz sessions attended by him. He may also be heard singing this ballad on the Folkways album Ballads, Blues & A Spiritual (FB 3816).

*GAMBLER'S BLUES*

It was down by old Joe's barroom
On the corner by the square;
They were serving drinks as usual,
And the usual crowd was there.

On my left stood Big Joe McKennedy,
And his eyes were bloodshot red;
Well, he burned to the crowd around him,
These are the very words he said:

I went down to that St. James Infirmary,
I saw my baby there;
Stretched out on a long white table,
So sweet, so cold, so fair.

**CHORUS:**
Let her go, let her go, God bless her,
Wherever she may be;
She may search this wide world over,
Never find a sweet man like me.

When I die please bury me
In my high topped Stetson hat,
Put a twenty dollar gold piece on my watch chain,
My gang will know I died standing pat.

I want six crap shooters for pall bearers,
A chorus girl to sing me a song;
Put a jazz band on my hearse wagon,
Raise hell as I stroll along.

**CHORUS:**
Well, now that I've told my story,
I'll take another shot of booze,
And if anyone should happen to ask you
Well, I've got those gambler's blues.

*SIDII, Band 2: GAMBLER'S BLUES*
(Sung by Dave Van Ronk) Time: 2:42

This hard-rock miner's song from Montana is an obvious parody of The Cowboy's Lament, though the singer from whom it was collected, himself a ranch- owner, emphatically denied ever having heard a cowboy sing the latter song. Kyle Pugh, formerly a miner, reported having heard the song in the mines of Butte around 1905. The dating of this song seems reasonable enough in light of the fact that Jim Brennan (mentioned in the opening stanza) worked as foreman of the Mountain Con mine from 1904 to 1915.

Dr. Wayland D. Hand collected the three stanzas given below (together with an additional four stanzas which appear to have been inspired by some other song) from Kyle Pugh in 1945, in Butte, Montana.

I ONCE WAS A CARMAN IN THE BIG MOUNTAIN CON

'Twas once in the saddle I used to go dashing,
'Twas once as a cowboy I used to be brave;
But ain't it a pity, I came to Butte City
To work for Jim Brennan and now to my grave.

Oh, beat your drum loudly and sound your fife merrily,
Play the bagpipe as ye carry me on,
Place a square pointed fan on the lid of my coffin,
So I'll be known as I go along.

Go get six jolly ladies to come and dance o'er me;
Get six husky carmen to carry me on;
Take me to The Flat, boys, and lay the sod o' er me;
For I once was a carman on the Big Mountain Con.

'The Flat' - according to Wayland Hand, The Flat is a reference to the cemeteries of Butte which are located on a flat plains area south of the town.

**SIDII, Band 3: I ONCE WAS A CARMAN IN THE BIG MOUNTAIN CON**
(Sung by Guthrie Meade) Time: 1:09

This recording may also be heard as part of an album of Folk Songs & Ballads of Idaho and Utah (Folkways FH 3943), sung by Rosalie Sorrels, with guitar accompaniment by Jim Sorrels.

**THE LINEMAN'S HYMN**

As I walked out in the streets of old Burley,
As I walked out in Burley one day,
I spied a young lineman all wrapped in white linen,
All wrapped in white linen and cold as the clay.

"I see by your scare-strap" I said, "that you are a lineman."
These words he did say, as I boldly walked by,
"Come sit down beside me, and hear my sad story,
I fell off the pole and I know I must die."

"'Twas once up the poles I used to go dashing,
Once up the poles I used to go gay;
First up the sixties, and then up the nineties,
But I fell off an eighteen, and I'm dying today.

"Oh, ring the phone softly, and climb the pole slowly,
Check your D-rings when you go aloft;
Keep your hooks sharpened, and grease up your scare-strap;
I'm telling you, Buddy, that ground ain't so soft.

"Get me six drunken linemen to carry my coffin,
Six splicers' helpers to mud-in' my grave;
Take me to Kline, the Great White Father,
And let him mourn over his gallant young slave."

1 scare-strap - a wide, heavy leather belt with which linemen fasten themselves to the telegraph pole.

2 D-rings - large metal rings, in the shape of a "D", to which the scare-strap is hooked.

3 hooks - the sharp spurs or gaffs bound to the lineman's shoes which bite into the wooden pole as he climbs it, or as he braces himself against the scare-strap.
epicier's helpers - assistant cable splicers

5 mud-in - refilling a hole, as after a wooden pole has been set in the ground.

6 Great White Father - a sarcastic appellation for Harry Kline (see headnote to ballad above).

SIDE II, Band 5: THE WILD LUMBERJACK
(Sung by Kenneth S. Goldstein) Time: 1:47

Still another obvious parody of "The Cowboy's Lament", in which the western setting has been replaced by the 'big timbers' of the northern lumbering country.

The text sung here (to a conventional 'Cowboy's Lament' tune) may be found in Henry W. Shoemaker's "Mountain Minstrelsy of Pennsylvania" (Philadelphia, 1931). Colonel Shoemaker's headnote to the song reads: "Version of the old song, "The Wild Cowboy", as sung in Potter County logging camps, with many variations. Reported by John C. French."

The following text was turned into the Indiana University Folklore Archives by a student who learned it from a roommate at the University of Denver in 1950. It is sung here by Jan Brunvand, of Indiana University, himself an ardent skiing fan. Mr. Brunvand is accompanied on guitar by Ellen Stekert.

A SUM VALLEY SONG
When I was a-skiing the hills of Sun Valley,
As I was a-skiing old Baldy one day,
I spied a young skier all wrapped in Alpaca,
All wrapped in alpaca, and cold as der Schnee.1

I see by your sputten that you are a skier,
These words he did say as I boldly schusses2 by;
Come fall down beside me, and hear my sad story,
I caught a right edge3 and I'm dying today.

It was once upon Baldy I used to ski gainly,
It was once upon Baldy I used to ski by;
When I was a-skiing in the snow makes me gently and sprinkle Schnee o'er me,
For I was a skier, my life was not long.

1 der Schnee - snow, in German.
2 schussed - pointing the skis down and letting them ride the snow.
3 right edge - when turning at high speed, catching an edge in the snow makes one ski stop suddenly while the other keeps moving, resulting in a grand version of the splits.
4 bunnies - novice skiers who, as a result of frequent spills, are always covered with snow and look like rabbits.

SIDE II, Band 6: A SUM VALLEY SONG
(Sung by Jan Brunvand) Time: 1:22

Here we have a skier's parody of "The Cowboy's Lament". The locale is "the hills of Sun Valley" and "Old Baldy", and the unfortunate skier meets his doom with his skis on.

The ballad sung here by John Greenway was included in his book "American Folksongs of Protest" (Philadelphia, 1953), the text having been supplied to him by the People's Songs Library.

THE BALLAD OF BLOODY THURSDAY
As I went walking one day down in Frisco,
As I went walking in Frisco one day,
I spied a longshoreman all dressed in white linen,
Dressed in white linen and cold as the clay.

I see by your outfit that you are a worker,
These words he did say as I slowly walked by;
I caught a right edge and I'm dying today.
It was down on the Front where I worked on the cargoes,
Worked on the cargoes ten hours a day;
I lost my right fingers because of the speedup,
The speedup that killed many a man in my day.

With too much of a sling load on old rusty cable,
The boss saved ten dollars, ten dollars, I say;
That old rusty sling broke, and fell on my buddy;
Ten lousy bucks carried Jimmie away.

Those were the days when the boss owned the union,
We poor working stiffs -- we had nothing to say;
Ours was to work and to keep our big traps shut;
We stood in the shape-up for a dollar a day.

But our children were hungry, their clothing was tattered;
It's then that we workers began to get wise;
We tore up our fink books and listened to bridges,
Saying, look at your kids, brothers, let's organize.

Strong and united we went to the bosses
For better conditions and a decent day's pay;
The bosses just laughed and we all had a meeting,
That's why we're hitting the bricks here today.

Our struggles were many, our struggles were bloody,
We fought the ship-owners with all that we had;
With thousands of dollars they tempted our leaders,
But our guys were honest, they couldn't be bad.

It was there on the line that I marched with my brothers,
It was there on the line as we proudly walked by;
The cops and the soldiers they brought up their rifles,
I'm shot in the breast and I know I must die.

Four hundred strikers were brutally wounded;
Four hundred workers and I left to die;
Remember the day, sir, to all of your children,
This bloody Thursday -- the fifth of July.

Don't beat the drums slowly, don't play the pipes lowly;
Don't play the dead march as they carry me along;
There's nothing that need righting, so keep right on fighting;
And lift your proud voices in proud union songs.

Fight on together, you organized workers,
Fight on together, there's nothing to fear;
Remember the example of this bloody Thursday,
Let nothing divide you, and victory is near.
The college campus, too, because he was Chinese.

Chicago students of the "Rake" cycle of previous number. As the labor folklorist, Archie
faire issue in a time of accepted collective bargaining. The labor's organizational struggles in
I couldn't keep up at.
As I walked out in the streets of the city,
Now listen young fellows
For I'm too old to
It

Who's going to hire a man who's past sixty,
Now who's going to hire a man who's past sixty,
For I'm a professor
And in the grave throw me and roll the
time when I parted,

THE BALLAD OF SHERMAN WU
As I was out walking the streets of Northwestern, I spied a young freshman dejected and blue,
I see by your fret pin that you are a Psi U,
If I had a fret pin I'd be one too,
I can't have a fret pin cause I'm Sherman Wu.
The dean said, Now, Sherman, don't make a commotion,
I see your fret pin that you are a Psi U,
If I had a fret pin I'd be one too,
I can't have a fret pin cause I'm Sherman Wu.
Now they still haven't made a Psi U out of Sherman,

Now I'm too old to
So when I asked him, Why are you dejected?
He said, I'm Chinese and can't join Psi U.
As I was out walking the streets of Northwestern, I spied a young freshman dejected and blue;
He said, I'm Chinese and can't join Psi U.

SIDE II, Band 10: THE PROFESSOR'S LAMENT
(Sung by Roger Abraham) Time: 3:15
This delightful parody (subtitled "The Degeneration of a Traditional Ballad") was reported as having
As sung here by Roger Abraham of the University of Pennsylvania, the text of this ballad was first printed in

THE PROFESSOR'S LAMENT
As I walked out in the streets of West L. A.,
As I walked out in West L.A. one day,
Oh beat the drum slowly and play the fife slowly,
Oh beat the drum slowly and play the fife slowly,
Play the death march as you carry me along;
Take me back to fair Kansas, there lay the sod o'er me,
For I'm a professor and know I've done wrong.

SIDE II, Band 9: THE BALLAD OF SHERMAN WU
(Sung by Pete Seeger) Time: 2:04
The college campus, too, has had its share of parodies of the "Rake" cycle of ballads. This topical parody is
reported to have been composed by "University of Chicago students" (shades of communal composition!) in
the fall of 1956, after a Northwestern University freshman, was forced to resign as a fraternity pledge because he was Chinese.

This recording may also be heard as part of an album of modern topical ballads, Gazette (Folkways FM 2501), sung by Pete Seeger accompanying himself on banjo and 12 string guitar.

It was once on the campus I used to go dashing,
And in the grave throw me and roll the sod o'er me,
For I'm a professor and know I've done wrong.

Get six happy colleagues to carry my coffin,
Get six pretty coeds short, medium and tall;
But acres of bluebooks2 all over my coffin,
Bluebooks to deaden the sods as they fall.

Oh read the books slowly and toll the chimes lowly,
Now I'm too old to
It

Now who's going to hire a man who's past sixty,
For I'm a professor
And in the grave throw me and roll the sod o'er me,
For I'm a professor and know I've done wrong.

Oh bury beside me my pen and portfolio,
My cap on my head, and my gown wrapped around me;
And on top of my coffin put a bottle of Likker,
That my colleagues may drink and thus have one on me.

We read his books slowly and tolled the chimes lowly,
We all loved our teacher although he'd done wrong.

1 Kansas - Professor Nygard was then a teacher at a Kansas University.
2 bluebooks - examination booklets
3 Lady I and the Elf Knight - Child ballad 4

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR THE STUDY OF THE "THE UNFORTUNATE RAKE" AND HIS FAMILY


LITHO IN U.S.A.