

The Sheffield Apprentice



I was brought up in Sheffield, not of a high degree. My
par - ents reared me ten - der - ly. They had no child but me. But
I be - ing fond of ro - ving just where my fan - cy led, I
was bound out ap - pren - tice, when all my joys were fled.

I did not like my master; he did not use me well.
I formed a resolution not long with him to dwell.
Unknown to my poor parents from him I ran away;
I steered my course to London, oh cursed be that day.

I had not been in London for days past only three
Before a wealthy lady proposed to hire me.
She offered me great wages, with her I did agree
To go and live in Holland, which proved my destiny.

I had not been in Holland for weeks past only three
Before that my young mistress grew very fond of me.
She says, "My gold and silver, my houses and rich land,
If you'll consent for to marry me, shall be at your command.

I says, "Dear honored lady, I cannot wed you both,
For I have lately promised and took a solemn oath
To wed no one but Polly, your pretty waiting maid.
So excuse me now, dear mistress, she has my heart betrayed."

Then in an angry humor away from me she ran,
Vowing to be revenged on me before the time was long.
For she found out by my answer she could not be my wife
And planned a cruel project to take away my life.

One evening as I was walking just for to take the air
My mistress followed after me, plucking the flowers fair.
A gold ring from her finger at the passing of me by
She slipped into my pocket; now for it I must die.

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She swore that I had robbed her, and quickly I was brought
To stand before the judges to answer for my fault.
Long time I pleaded innocence but all of no avail;
She swore so hard against me that I was brought to jail.

The sentence it was passed and the end was drawing near.
All for to execute me, it was their only care.
From the place of my confinement they took me to the tree.
Now God forgive my mistress, for she has ruined me.

Come, all of you good people of high and low degree,
Don't glory in my downfall, but kindly pity me.
Believe me, I die innocent, I bid you all adieu,
So fare you well, pretty Polly, I die for loving you.

I believe my oldest brother told me that this was a song our grandmother sang. Mother seems always to have known and sung it. It is a song that seems to have been sung in this country, as I lately met an old lady from Augusta, Maine, who said her mother used to sing it. I found it in a book belonging to an old sailor over twenty years ago, a book apparently bought in New Zealand, and it is also included in a collection of songs learned in the Kentucky Mountains by Bradley Kincaid.