

I went to a christening one Sunday afternoon. I stood godfather for the little girl, you know, their baby girl, and they went home and I was going to walk home. I started home and I went three or four miles. There was a little breeze of sou' west wind. Comin' along I passed a bridge and I came to where there was an old house. The house was burnt or something because there was nothing there but the cellar. I noticed a woman standing up in the cellar, kind of a slim tall woman dressed in white and dark hair and her two hands on her hips. Well, I passed pretty near as this building was to the road, and the cellar was inside of the fence you know, Anyway I noticed that her clothes wasn't movin' at all, not a move with the wind, and I passed along and I'd swear to God that her eyes were on me from the time I came in sight until I passed her. I got home all right and oh about two or three weeks later - my wife's sister was married to a Burton fellow from Bay St. Lawrence; they used to live down here at Sydney Mines - and I told him what I seen and he started laughin'. I said,

"What are you laughin' at?"

"I'm laughin' at that woman," he says, "that was standin' in the cellar." I says, "Do you think you know her?"

He says, "Yes," he says, "I know her just as well as I know you, but," he says, "there's one thing I can't understand," he says, "that woman died three or four years before you were born."

"Now that's queer, wasn't it? He couldn't understand it and I couldn't."

Question: Did anybody near to you die about that time?

Answer: Eh? No, I don't think.

Question: Did anybody else ever see her?

Answer: No/

Question: And had she lived in that spot?

Answer: Yes, that's where they lived.

Question: And was she wearing old fashioned clothes?

Answer: Yes, the clothes that she was wearing that day, he said, those were the clothes she was always wearin'. That house burned down and I think her husband died after that.

Question: She had on a long skirt had she? ~~And she had something on her head?~~

Answer: Yes, yes.

Question: And anything on her head?

Answer: No, there was nothing on her head. No.

Told by Mr. Augustine MacDonald, North Sydney and Meat Cove and recorded by Helen Creighton, June 1958

There was a pretty fair maid in London did dwell,
 For wit and for beauty no one could never tell,
 Her master and her mister she served for seven years
 And what followed after you quickly now shall hear.

2

She put her box upon her head and gazing along,
 The first one she met was a stout and noble man,
 SHE says, "My pretty fair maid where are you going so late?
 I will show you a straight road across this countreee."

3

He took this fair maid by the hand, he led her along,
 He says, "My pretty fair maid the truth to you I'll tell,
 Deliver up all your money without the least delay
 Or this very moment your life I'll take away."

4

Her tears fell down her rosy cheeks, like fountains did flow,
 Crying, "Where shall I wander or where shall I go?"
 And while this stout and noble man was searching for his knife
 This beautiful damsel she stole away his life

5

She put her box upon her head and gazing along,
 The next one she met was a noble gentleman,
 He says, "My pretty fair maid where are you going so late?
 Or what is the noise I heard at yonder gate?"

6

With that box upon your head to yourself it don't belong,
 To your master or mistress you have done something wrong,
 To your master or mistress you have done something ill,
 This moment from trembling you cannot stand still."

7

With that box upon my head to myself it do belong,
 To my master or mistress I have done nothing wrong,
 To my master or mistress I have done nothing ill
 I'm afeared of my life, it's a robber I have killed. "

8

She took this gentleman by the hand and led him to the spot
 Where this beautiful young man lay bleeding from his face,
 "He demanded up my money, I quickly let him see,
 He tried for to murder me, I proved his overthrow."

9

This gentleman got off his horse to see what he had got,
 He found two loaded pistols, some powder and some shot,
 He found two loaded pistols, some powder and a ball,
 A knife and a whistle more robbers for to call.

10

He put the whistle to his lips, he blew it loud and strong,
 Four more robbers came creeping down the ~~ixnax~~ lane,
 This gentleman shot one of them without the least delay
 While this beautiful damsel she shot the other three.

He says, "My pretty fair maid for what you have done
I'll make you my loving bride and that before long,
I'll make you my noble bride and that very soon,
For taking your own part and firing of the gun."

Sung by Mr. Augustine MacDonald, and recorded by
Helen Creighton, June 1958

"Who is there at my bedroom window
Disturbing me from a long night's rest?"
"It's me, it's me, your own true lover,
Rise up Mary and let me in."

2

Mary rose from her soft down pillow,
For to see who she could see,
It's there she spied her own true lover
Sitting by a willow tree.

3

"Oh Mary dear go and ask your mother
If you may be my own true bride,
If she says no return and tell me,
I'll come no more a-courting thee."

4

"It is no use to ask my mother,
For she is bound to have me free,
Oh Willie dear go court some other
And come no more a-courting me."

5

"Oh Mary dear go and ask your father
If you may be my own true bride,
If he says no return and tell me,
I'll come no more a-courting thee."

6

"It is no use to ask my father
For he's in bed a-sound asleep
With a shining dagger placed beside him
To pierce the one that I love best."

7

Mary took that shining dagger
And pierced it through her faithful heart,
Crying, "Farewell father, farewell mother,
Willie and I are far apart."

Sung by Mr. Augustine MacDonald, North Sydney and Meat Cove,
and recorded by Helen Creighton, June 1958

Come young and old I pray draw near,
 I pray you will draw near,
 It's of as wicked a murder
 As ever you did hear,
 And of a handsome lady
 Whose age was scarce eighteen,
 Her beauty bright did me delight
 Till Satan made me sin.

2

She was a merchant's daughter and I a farmer's son,
 Her home was in the countree convenient to my own,
 In privacy I courter her till her I had beguiled,
 'Twas then to take her precious life I planned the scheme most well.

3

It was on a Sunday evening as you may understand
 I sent for her in privacy, she quickly came to me,
 I says, "Now Ann if you'll consent to Wexford we will go,
 It's there we will get married, I'm sure no one will know."

4

It was late at night when we set out to cross the countree,
 It would bring the tears down from your eyes to hear what she did say,
 When I was going to murder her I made her this reply,
 "Come Annie you'll go no further for it's here you'll have to die."

5

"Oh James think of your infant dear and don't give me a fright
 Or don't commit a murder this dark and dismal night,
 I'll swear to him above the sky if you will spare my life
 I'll never more trouble you or ask to be your wife."

6

But all she said was all in vain for I did strike her sore,
 And with the heavy loaded whip I left her in her gore,
 Her blood and brains did stain the ground, her moans would break
 your heart,
 I thought I had her murdered before I did depart.

7

But she was alive next morning as by the break of day
 When a shepherd's only daughter by chance did go that way,
 She found her lying in her gore, she ran to her relief,
 Crying, "I was murdered here last night, will you go and bring the
 priest."

8

The priest he was sent for and the doctor came likewise,
 When she gave her information they sent out in disguise,
 They quickly surrounded me and put me on my trial,
 Then I was taken prisoner and lodged in Longford jail.

9

So now I lie in prison bound until my trial day,
 The judge pronounced my sentence, those words to me did say,
 "For the murdering of an orphan girl whose age was scarce eighteen
 On the twenty-fifth of April you shall die on the gallows tree."

My name is James MacDonald from this life now I must part
For the murdering of Miss Ann O'Brien I'm sorry to the heart,
I hope the Lord will pardon me before my dying day
And when I'm on the gallows good people for me pray.

Sung by Mr. Augustine MacDonald, North Sydney and Meat
Cove, and recorded by Helen Creighton, June 1958