

# Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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## The Brown and Yellow Earl

The Brown and Yellow Earl

As I was going down the road one fine day, O  
O, the brown and yellow earl  
I met with a man who was no right man  
O, love of my heart

(similarly):

He asked me was the woman with me my daughter  
And I said that she was my married wife.

He asked me would I lend her for an hour and a day, O  
And I said I would do anything that was fair.

So you take the upper road and I'll take the lower  
And I'll meet you again by the bank of the river.  
I was going that way one hour and a day, O  
When she came to me without any shame.

When I heard her news, I lay down and I died, O  
And they sent three men to the woods for timber.

A board of holly and a board of elder  
And three great yards of cloth about me.

Me own dear mother, she was a woman;  
I could tell you another sad story about women.

traditional (translated from Irish by James Joyce)

Note: In the feudal British Isles, the lord or earl of the manor had the first right to bed the new bride of any of his subjects. By the time of the brown and yellow earl, this custom had been forgotten by all but, perhaps, the lords themselves. When the earl spies the pretty young bride, he invokes the old law. The husband innocently hands her over for an hour and a day, only to kill himself in grief when he learns the truth. Debby McClatchy

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