

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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The Proper English Gentleman

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He's a proper English Gentleman who never spills his beer.
He dines with all the ladies and never shows his fear
Of picking up the wrong fork or swearing at the soup
When it's hot enough to burn him, or jumping through the hoop
Of English Society, and all it represents.

But he's a damned good soldier in front of all the troops
And marches like a gentleman in his fine leather boots
And eats in the reg'lar mess and calls the men by name
And shares the dirty work with 'em, what's called the killing game
Of English Imperialism and all it represents.

But by his own hearthside he's a different sort
And he beats his tenants quarterly and no one dares retort,
He takes their wives and daughters, and never stops to think
That a man might someday shoot him when he's had enough to drink!
Of English duplicity, and all it represents.

He's the finest of examples, and there's others of his kind
Who keep their secrets closely and never seem to mind
That the man who sits at table and his their deepest trust
Might carry in his bosom the foulest kind of lust,
Not English respectability, and all it represents.

So watch you step, my laddies, keep your distance, ladies dear,
Watch out for English gentlemen and don't ever let them near.
Their faces won't betray them, their deeds are fine and true,
But put them near temptation and it really will not do --
For certain English gentlemen and all they represent.

note: Here's a song that I came across in a historical novel set
in 1919 (A Test Of Wills by Charles Todd, St Martin's 1996,
with its shell-shocked Scotland Yard inspector), thought it
would be of interest. Anybody knows who wrote the damn
thing, or when it was first performed, please let me
know. Stu Shiffman <roscoe@halcyon.com>

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