

The Arsenic Tragedy

The Arsenic Tragedy

Come listen to my tragedy, good people young and old,
It's of a dreadful story to you I will unfold
Concerning a fair damsel, Miss Wires was her name,
She was murdered by her husband, and he hung for the same.

Young Mary, she was beautiful, not of a high degree;
Young Henry Green was wealthy, I'd have you plainly see
And he says, "My dearest Mary, if you will be my wife,
I'll guard, guide and protect you all through this gloomy life."

"Oh Henry, dearest Henry, I fear that never could be
For you have rich relations, I've none so rich as you,
And when your parents come to know, they'd scorn me from their door;
I'd rather you marry some other girl with wealth laid up in store.

"Oh Mary, dearest Mary, why doth torment me so?
"Oh Mary, dearest Mary, why doth torment me so?
For just as long as you deny, so quick I'll end my life,
For I no longer wish to live, unless you be my wife."

So there, believing all he said was true, she then became his wife
But little did she think or know he meant to take her life:
Little did she think or know, or little did she expect
He meant to give her arsenic, the just one to protect.

They hadn't been married scarce three weeks when she was taken ill
Great doctors, they were sent for, all for to try their skill
The doctors came from far and near, but her they could not save,
So then it was pronounced by all she must go to the grave.

Her brother, hearing of the news, straightway to her did go,
Saying, "Sister dear, you're dying, the doctors tell me so;
Now sister, since you're dying and on your bed of death,
Pray, haven't you been poisoned by him you thought your love?"

"Oh brother, I know I'm dying and on my bed of death;
"Oh brother, I know I'm dying and on my bed of death;
Young Henry Green has poisoned me, dear brother, for him send,
For I do love him just as well as when he was my friend."

When Henry got these tidings, he went his wife to see;
She says, "Dearest Henry, was you ever deceived by me?"
Three times she cried, "Dear Henry!" and sank into a tomb;
He gazed on her indifferent ways and silent left the room.

Now he is took to the bloody hills and led upon the stand
To answer for the blackest crime committed in our land,
But he says, "I am not guilty, her friends I do deny;
I am not guilty of the crime for that which I die."

From Folk Songs of the Catskills, Cazden et al
Collected from Elston Van Wagner

note: The events resulted in the hanging of Henry Green in 1845
for the poisoning of Mary Wyatt. This song was apparantly adapted from a
music hall song called Billy Vite and Mary Green, published in 1823; a not-
unusual practice for producing topical songs. RG

DT #666

Laws F14

apr96