

# Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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### The Jamestown Flood

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Is it news you ask for, strangers, as you stand and gaze around  
At those cold and lifeless bodies lying here upon the ground?  
Do you see that lady yonder, with the little girl and boy?  
That's my wife, my darling Minnie, once my house- hold pride and joy.

Just an hour ago I brought them from the river's fatal tide,  
Laid them here where now you see them, all together side by side.  
Strangers, if you'll turn to listen to my story long and sad,  
You'll confess it is no wonder that today I'm almost mad.

We were seated at the table chatting in a happy mood,  
When we heard a mighty rushing like some great and awful flood,  
Nearer! nearer! came the water, till at last it reached our home,  
O the horror of the moment when we realized our doom!

Not one moment did we tarry, but with cheeks and brow aglow  
Climbed we to the topmost chamber for how long I do not know,  
Then I clasped my wife and children to my chilled and aching heart  
For I saw that soon or later we would surely have to part.

Faster, faster rushed the waters; tighter, tighter grew my grasp  
Til a wave of mud and fury tore both children from my clasp  
Then my wife grew faint and trembly, cold and white her marble brow,  
One low whisper, scarcely spoken; "You are all that's left me now."

"Let your ams enfold, me, husband, lay your head upon my breast,  
O, our children, may he guide them to a place of peace and rest;  
May he spare you to me, darling, to protect"- But while she spoke  
Downward rushed a mighty current and my deathlike grasp was broke.

Down she went, my last sweet darling, she my true and loving wife,  
She had been my joy and comfort all along the path of life.  
Just as in a dream I stood there till at last a shout I heard,  
From some men who stood above me, " Grasp the rope, we'll help you out."

And before night's sable curtain spread across the angry wave  
I was drawn above and rescued from a cold and watery grave,  
But my darling wife and children floated on till on  
They were found and carried to me, but their work on earth was done.

Sad and mournful as I stood there, saw no signs of life or breath;  
O'er my heart fell deep dark shadows as I saw them cold in death.

And a flood of thought came o'er me, overwhelming mind and heart,  
And my soul cried out within me, " O my loved ones, must we part?

Fare thee well, my wife and children, in my heart You'll ever be  
Till I too shall cross the river where we will united be,  
Then we'll have the joy of loving as we never loved before,  
Where no hearts are chilled and broken, in the sweet forevermore."

Franz Lee Rickaby: Ballads and Songs of the Shanty-Boy (1925? reprinted Clearfield Company, Baltimore 1993)

Louise Pound: American Ballads and Songs (1920 reprinted 1972, Charles Scribner's sons, New York)

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