

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

www.traditionalmusic.co.uk

One Morning in May

One Morning in May

When I was, a young girl I used to seek pleasure,
When I was a young girl I used to drink ale;
Right out of the alehouse and into the jailhouse,
Out of a barroom and down to my grave.

Come Papa, come Mama, and sit you down by me,
Come sit you down by me and pity my case;
My poor head is aching, my sad heart is breaking,
My body's salivated and I'm bound to die.

Go send for the preacher to come and pray for me;
Go send for the doctor to heal up my wounds;
My poor head is aching, my sad heart is breaking,
My body's salivated, and Hell is my doom.

I want four young ladies to bear up my coffin,
I want three young maidens to carry me on,
And each of them carry a bunch of wild roses,
To lay on my body as I pass along.

One morning, one morning, one morning in May,
I spied this young lady all clad in white linen,
All clad in white linen and cold as the clay.

(Sung by Rally Wood)

Variants of The Bad Girl's Lament in which venereal disease is mentioned or even hinted at as the cause of the young woman's demise are extremely rare. Herbert Halpert collected a unique text in New Jersey in which specific mention is made of the girl's suffering from 'blue bores' (venereal chancres), and two texts (including the one referred to above) in which mercury is mentioned as a possible curative aid for the disease.

In the Virginia variant sung here, and the Virgin Islands one which follows, a venereal disease is hinted at by use of the terms 'salivated' and 'salivation'. Ointments of metallic mercury have been used in past times as a cure for syphilis, and one of the results of such curative attempts is an excessive flow of saliva on the part of the patient. Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary gives as a definition for 'salivation': "An abnormally increased secretion and flow of saliva, especially when due to the effects of drugs, as mercury."

Hally Wood learned this variant from the Library of Congress recording of Mrs. Texas Gladden, of Salem, Virginia, collected by Alan & Elizabeth Lomax in 1941. Mrs. Gladden's singing of this ballad may be heard on a recording of Anglo-American Ballads from the Archive of American Folk Song (AAFS L1) issued by the recording laboratory of the Music Division of the Library of Congress.

DT #350

Laws B1

AJS

oct99