

# Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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## Waste Not, Want Not

Waste Not, Want Not

(Rowland Howard)

(You Never Miss the Water Till the Well Runs Dry)

1. When a child, I lived at Lincoln, with my parents at the farm,  
The lessons that my mother taught to me were quite a charm;  
She would often take me on her knee, when tired of childish play,  
And as she pressed me to her breast, I've heard my mother say:

Chorus:

Waste Not, Want not, is a maxim I would teach,  
Let your watch word be dispatch and practice what you preach,  
Do not let your chances like sunbeams pass you by,  
For you never miss the water till the well runs dry.

2. As years rolled on, I grew to be a mischief-making boy!  
Destruction seemed my only sport, it was my only joy;  
And well do I remember, when oft-times well chastised,  
How father sat beside me, then, and thus has me advised:

3. When I arrived at manhood, I embarked in public life,  
And found it was a rugged road, bestrewn with care and strife;  
I speculated foolishly, my losses were severe;  
But still a tiny voice kept whispering in my ear:

4. Then I studied strict economy, and found to my surprise,  
My funds, instead of sinking, very quickly then did rise;  
I grasped each chance, and always "struck the iron while 'twas hot,"  
I seized my opportunities, and never once forgot:

5. I'm married now, and happy, I've a charming little wife,  
We live in peace and harmony, devoid of care and strife;  
Fortune smiles upon us, we have little children three,  
The lesson that I teach them as they prattle round my knee:

From the singing of Helen Schneyer, who got it from Sigmund Spaeth's book "Read 'Em and Weep" Spaeth says: Let it never be said that the ribald songs of the Nineteenth Century outnumbered the virtuous. For every lyric endorsement of intemperance, there was an equally powerful presentation of the advantages of the restrained and moral life. "Adage songs" were very popular as stimulators of uplift and the best known

of the lot was You Never Miss the Water Till the Well Runs Dry. There is practically no answer to this argument, and even though the chorus mixes its metaphors a bit, it remains one of the world's most intelligible treatises on economy. Rowland Howard was the author, and Hamilton S. Gordon the publisher.

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