

LYRICS+INFO : JOY+JEALOUSY



joy and jealousy



Robbing On The Highway

Kind gentlemen all pray listen awhile,

With a down a down,

hey down hey down,

I'll sing you a song shall make you smile,

With a down

It's of a young lady both valiant and gay,

Who went out a robbing upon the highway.

With a down, derry derry

derry down down.

Dressed in man's apparel Miss Hughes
she set out, / Well mounted on horseback
without fear or doubt, / With two loaded
pistols she then rode away, / As bold as a
lion to seek for her prey.

She had not rode long ere she met with a
prize, / Which caused her courage and valour
to rise, / She loved to have money, although
a bad plan / And presently met with a rich
gentleman.

She rode up to Mr Witcomb and bid him to
stand; / With a pistol presented in her right
hand: / "Do get your money and without
strife, / Or in but a moment I'll take your
sweet life."

He pulled out his pocket-book seeing her so
bold, / With two hundred and twenty in bills,
notes and gold / "Here take this all, my good
fellow" says he, / "Only spare my life," "I will
sir," said she.

She put into her pocket, a glorious sight /

Then rode up with speed and bid him
good night / Overjoyed with her prize and
with a light heart, / It proved for her but an
unlucky start.

She was quickly pursued and taken at last /
When once more this lady in prison was cast /
/ She was tried in Lent Assizes and pardoned
from death / On account of her parents and
her noble high birth.

Though her father's a gentleman each they
do say / But his daughter like others has
wandered astray, / Being cursed in love
caused her to roam / And drove her to
distress and dare not go home.

This last robbery committed just made up
a score / She took from the rich and gave it
to the poor / Left like to Nevison **[famous
highwayman]** - she thought it a good deed, /
By giving to those whom she found were
in need.

We'll give her applause though she should
not act so / It was a wrong attempt for a
lady to show, / Upon the highway to seek her
bread, / By frightening a gentleman almost
to dead.



BACKGROUND

I found this in the Bodleian Library archives,
under the title 'The Female Robber'. This
seemed a little unspecific, and so I retitled
it 'Robbing On The Highway'. Judging by
the typeface and the absence of long 's's
I would guess it was published around the
year 1820 (though that is a total guess), and
judging by its mini-preface I would guess it
was based on a real person and actual
events. Here's what it says:

*Written on Miss Hughes, a Gentlewoman of
Bath, who robbed Mr Witcomb of the Boar's
head in Bristol, of Two hundred Guinea Bills,
Notes, and a Twenty-pound Bank of England.*

The print (which I got from the online
archive) is very hard to read, and I suspect
I copied some of the words wrong. But
hey, that's the Tradition, right? And I'm
too scared to go in and check. I also left
out the last verse(s?), which I think suggest
she married the judge. Which is a great
ending but I felt the song was long enough
as it is, so I leave that for someone else.

One of the little things that I found takes
a bit of adjusting to with these old songs
is the use of the word 'gay' as meaning
carefree rather than homosexual (it seems
to have been one of the most common
words in the language). But I often find that
the double-meaning tends to give the story
a little extra depth. For example, it makes
me wonder, was Miss Hughes 'cursed in

love' because a boyfriend got her pregnant?
Or did she 'dare not go home' because her
lover was female? I like to think the latter...

The tune is given as "Derry Down", which
I took to mean the song 'The Three Ravens'
(first published 1611, but probably much
older), which seems to fit these words.



The First of May, Four Up & Old Molly Oxford

BACKGROUND

Three tunes from the Morris dancing
world, in a tuneset loosely inspired by
May Day in Oxford that I had taken to call
"First of May, Up at Four and off to Old
Molly Oxford". I first heard 'The First of
May' performed by the majestic Oxford
folk band Magpie Lane. It features on
their album 'The Oxford Ramble' - one of
my favourite albums ever. As does 'Old
Molly Oxford' come to think of it, although
I think that one I had heard before, as it
often crops up in folk sessions and Morris
dance-outs. The middle tune, 'Four Up',
I had assumed was traditional because the
Morris side that I play for often do it, but it
turns out it was written by Barry Goodman
(of the Outside Capering Crew, amongst
many other things), and you can hear his
version on the 'Grandson of Morris On'
album. (And apologies to Barry - I realise I
accidentally changed the tune slightly!)

I tried to play the recorder part myself
but failed woefully and got in the experts:
in this case Helen Rose, who did a truly
fantastic job. It sounds exactly like I hoped
it would. I also thought I would add some
sukouus guitar playing on the end, just
because it would be a slightly left-field
thing to do that would somehow fit. But
in the last few months all forms of African
guitar-based pop have become achingly hip
on the Oxford indie scene, and so I now
feel the need to clarify that I recorded it
long before that happened. These things
matter, obviously.



The Mermaid

*One Friday morn as we set sail,
Not very far from land,
We there did espy a fair pretty maid
With a comb and a glass in her hand,
her hand, her hand,
With a comb and a glass in her hand.*

*While the raging seas did roar,
And the stormy winds did blow,
While we jolly sailor-boys
were up into the top,
And the land-lubbers lying down below,
below, below,
And the land-lubbers lying down below.*

*Up starts the captain of our gallant ship,
And a brave young man was he:
'I've a wife and a child in fair Bristol town,
But a widow I fear she will be.'*

For the raging seas did roar...

*Then up starts the mate of our gallant ship,
And a bold young man was he:
'Oh! I have a wife in fair Portsmouth town,
But a widow I fear she will be.'*

For the raging seas did roar...

*Then up starts the cook of our gallant ship,
And a gruff old bastard was he:
'Oh! I have a wife and a mistress and a dog,
Oh but widows I fear they will be.'*

For the raging seas did roar...

*And then up spoke the little cabin-boy,
And a pretty little boy was he;
'Oh! I am more griev'd for my daddy and
my mummy
Than are you for your wives all three.'*

For the raging seas did roar...

*Then three times round went our gallant ship,
And three times round went she;
For the want of a life-boat we all went down,
And we sank to the bottom of the sea.*

For the raging seas did roar...

BACKGROUND

A very well-known song with many variants.
Martin Carthy does a dark minor version.
But it was the version performed by the
City Waites that caught my imagination.

One of the trickiest decisions I had to make

was which words to use for the third line of the chorus. Most people sing 'up and up aloft' and I've heard other lines too. But my songwriter sense kept telling me that 'up into the top' just sounded better, so I went with that.

And that happens to be the version I found in the book that I've increasingly taken to calling 'The Manual': *Popular Music of the Olden Time* by VV. Chappell. In it he describes the song as a "fragment of an old sea song, contributed by Mr. Charles Sloman in 1840."

The song seems to suggest that mermaids were believed to have a sort of 'Flying Dutchman' effect: that simply to set eyes on them meant certain death. How the composer then managed to write the song after their own death is a bit of a mystery, but quite a common one in traditional songs, as the next one will demonstrate.

Chappell also specified this one should be performed "Right jovially, and moderately fast." I did my best.



William Grismond's Downfall

*O come you wilful young men,
and hear what I shall tell,
My name is William Grismond,
at Leintwardine did dwel;*

*O there I did a murder,
as it is known full well;
And for my offence I shall die, I shall die.
And for my offence I shall die.*

*There was a neighbour's daughter
that lived me hard by,
Whom I had promised marriage,
and with her I did lie
I did dissemble with her,
my lust to satisfy;
And for my offence I shall die....*

*I had my pleasure on her,
I had my lewd desire,
The using of her body
was that I did require:
I was overcome and I was ensnared
by Him that was a Liar;
And for my offence I shall die....*

*She claimed of me marriage,
and said she was with child,
Saying "Marry me sweet William,
now you have me defiled:
If you do now forsake me,
I utterly am spoiled,
And for my offence I shall die...."*

*When she had used these speeches,
my anger did arise,
And then to work her overthrow,
I quickly did devise;
What though her words were honest,
yet I did them despise;
And for my offence I shall die....*

*In flattering short I brought her,
into the field of broom,
And when we both together
into the field were come,
I had my pleasure with her,
and then I was her doom;
And for my offence I shall die....*

*Then in the broom I killed her,
with my accursed knife,
There hatefully I killed her,
who loved me as her life;
I cut her throat, I killed her,
who should have been my wife;
And for my offence I shall die....*

*But then my loving father,
his gold he did not spare,
To save me from the gallows,
he had of me great care;
But it would not be granted,
the gallows was my share;
And for my offence I did die, I did die.
And for my offence I did die.*

BACKGROUND

I stumbled on this one almost by accident. I was looking at another broadside song which said it was to the tune of 'And for my offence I shall die', and I thought that sounded pretty cool, and wondered if there were any words for it. After a bit of hunting, I found 'William Grismond's Downfall'.

I suspect this is also based on a real event, judging by the song's brief preface:

*A Lamentable Murther by him committed
at Lainterdine, in the country of Hereford,
the 12 of March 1650. with his woeful
Lamentation.*

It took me a while to understand that 'his gold he did not spare' means that his father was actually trying to save him (as in 'he didn't spare any expense'). But it obviously didn't work. I liked the fact that this song has echoes of 'Robbing on the Highway', but whereas the one robbed from the rich and gave to the poor, and was pardoned

from death (winning the guilty admiration of the song's author), the other killed a pregnant woman in cold blood, and 'the gallows was his share'.

The tune given is 'Where Is My Love', which I took to be referring to the well-known traditional song 'The Blacksmith'. The tune just about fitted, although it did need a little shoe-horning here and there. The 'bridge' tune is 'Blackgrove'. (Via Ennio Morricone.)



The New Way to Make Love

1.
Young lovers, for love I'd not have you
despair, / But unto my frolicsome song lend
an ear, / At Oxford there lived two lords of
great fame, / One had a fair daughter, sweet
Susan by name

2.
The other lord he had a steward we hear, /
Was deeply in love with this lady fair, / But
yet for to court her he dares not pretend, /
For fear of the anger of her noble friends

3.
So great was his love he could not take rest /
For love and fear struggling both in his breast
: / At last in distraction a letter he writes, /
And defiantly sends it to his lady bright.

4.
Saying "Pardon fair lady, I humbly pray, / But
pity a lover that long-wishing lay, / I am a
lord's steward, so mean in degree, / I die for
thy sake, charming creature," said he.

5.
The lady returned this scornful reply, / "You
impudent fellow, I do not think that I, / Who
am a lady, my father's own heir, / I would wed
a lord's steward, I pray now forbear."

6.
As soon as the steward her answer received,
/ His heart was oppressed, and his spirits
were grieved, / So pensive he grew, that
within a short time / His place to another
was forced to resign

7.
He being invited one day to a feast / A
frolicsome doctor was one of the guests / He
quickly perceived the steward was in love, /
So he called him aside, and went to a grove.

8.
"Kind sir," says the doctor, "take it not amiss,
/ For I perceive your distemper is this, / That
you are in love with a young lady fair, / I'd
have you discover it now if you are.

9.
I have a medicine will quickly cure that
disease," / The steward smiled and seemed
very well pleased, / Saying "That's my
distemper, if you can me cure, / I fifty bright
guineas for you will procure."

10.
"But she is so much, sir, beyond my degree,
/ For such a noble lord's daughter is she."
/ "Never heed," says the doctor, "my wife
knows her know, / If you'll be ruled by me we'll
order it so."

11.
"I know of a chambermaid she is in need, /
She sent to my wife to help her with speed
: / You shall dress yourself in female attire,
/ My wife for a chambermaid soon shall

you hire,"

12.
"But what must I do, sir," the steward he
said, / "I don't understand, sir, the work of
a maid." / "Your work will be little," the
doctor did say, / "It's only to dress this young
lady gay."

13.
"My wife shall not know but you are a maid,
/ So you shall be dressed e'er she sees you,"
he said. / He liked of the frolic, all things
did prepare. / And he did appear like a
female so fair,

14.
The doctor he goes to his wife, then he said, /
"My dear, such a lady asked you for a maid ;
/ Where I dined today, a brisk maid I did see
/ Take her to your lady, my dear, instantly."

15.
"Come, I will go with you," the woman did
say, / "The lady will like you, because you are
gay." / The steward did strut with an air and
a grace, / And goes with the woman to see
his new place.

16.
The lady the chambermaid liked I declare, /
So she gave her earnest, and hired she were;
/ "I love a neat maid," the lady did cry, / "For
I with my chambermaid always do lie."

17.
The steward a-curtsey he drop to the ground,
/ For joy of that word he was ready to swoon
; / Being hired, he back to the doctor did he /
Overjoyed that he was with his lady to be

18.
The doctor cried, "Steward how will you
forbear, / Don't for fear that discovered
you are ; / It is a temptation I needs must

confess, / But you must forbear it, sir,
nevertheless."

19.

The steward he goes to his place for to find,
/ The lady she liked of his service so well
/ He was her bedfellow, he knew all her
mind, / Each night they would talk of their
sweethearts kind.

20.

"Here was a lord's steward," the lady did say,
/ "Not long since he wrote a letter to me, /
And really I liked his person," said she, / "But
only he is so mean in degree."

21.

One night as they both were laid down in
their bed / The chambermaid unto the lady
she said: / "Madam, this day I the steward
did see / Of which you did speak t'other
night unto me."

22.

"Well, how did you like him?" the lady did
say / "Why madam, I think he is proper and
gay; / His courteous behaviour, his carriage
and mean, / His person I think it is fit for
a queen."

23.

So then with a smile the young lady replied, /
"I wish that he lying here was by my side ; /
But unto the match you may very well think
/ My parents by any means will not consent."

24.

They talk of love stories till they fall asleep,
/ Then close to her side the steward did
creep; / Her charms he admired, as by her
he lay; / But remembered still what the
doctor did say,

25.

One day he to the young doctor did go, /

Saying, "Doctor, I very impatient do grow, /
Do strive to finish the frolic," he said, / "Or
else I discovered shall be I'm afraid."

26.

The doctor he gave him a medicine to take,
/ Saying, "This will lay you in a sound sleep; /
T'will stop any motion," the doctor he said,
/ "That all which do see you will think you
are dead."

27.

"Then they'll soon discover that you are a
man, / And when from sleep you recover
again, / For fear that the lady exposed
should be, / Her parents will instantly give
her to thee."

28.

Then home to his lady he instantly goes, /
And first took the medicine and fell in a
doze, / The lady awakening in the dead of
the night, / Began to be in a desperate fright.

29.

She pulled him and hauled him, but thinking
him dead / Like one in distraction she
jumped out of bed / And unto her mother
she runs in a fright, / Saying "Mother, the
chambermaid's dead by my side."

30.

The servants they ran up the stairs with all
speed / Some ran for the doctor the maid
for to bleed / "It is but a folly to bleed her,"
he said / "For really to tell you the truth she
is dead."

31.

The lady sat down, and she bitterly wept /
"I'm sure I am grieved that she died by my
side, / She was a good servant," the young
lady said, / "I'm sure I am sorry poor Betty
is dead."

32.

To lay out the corpse the maids did prepare,
/ Had you seen how they at one another
did stare; / "If I am not mistaken," then said
pretty Nan, / "I think our chambermaid's
turned to a man."

33.

"A man!" says the lady, "I'm sure you are all
wild, / I hope that the rogue has not got me
with child." / "With child," says the mother,
"You impudent queen! **[immoral woman /
prostitute]** / What is it by all this juggling
you mean?"

34.

"Dear mother, I hope you will not me blame,
/ I'm sure that I nothing did know of the
same; / 'Twas the doctor's wife that brought
him to me, / Therefore let us send for her
hastily."

35.

When to the woman they had told their tale,
/ She cried, "In your judgement, girls, do you
not fail" / She goes to the corpse and she
pulls down the sheet / She cries, "He's a
man! I plainly see it."

36.

But as they were in the midst of their fright
/ He waked from his sleep, and started
upright; / They took to their heels, and
downstairs they did fly / The old lord he
arose when he heard the outcry.

37.

The steward he dressed himself, and down
he did come / The old lord he said, "What is
this you have done? / Come tell me the truth
or I solemnly swear / I surely will punish you
very severe."

38.

He down'd on his knees, and the truth did

*relate, / The lord he did laugh till his sides
they did ache, / He liked of the frolic so
well, as we hear, / He willingly gave him his
daughter so dear.*

39.

*But is that the truth? I now declare, / I really
believe that he did it for fear : / The lady
his daughter by him was trepanned [i.e.
tricked] / For it was plainly proved she had
lain with a man.*

BACKGROUND

Everything about this adaptation was a gamble, and I'm still not entirely sure the end result works. So many of the earlier broadsides are really very long, and so one of the first decisions in adapting them is usually which verses to cut. But when I stumbled on 'The New Way To Make Love' I realised that I wanted to do one, just one, in its entirety. All 39 insane verses of it.

I mentioned this to a friend who said "Wow! That's a great idea. I mean... I won't listen to it... but..." Which was very good honest advice, because I realised that I probably wouldn't either if someone else had done it. So I knew I had to make it as concise as possible, and keep it under 7 minutes if possible.

Which I achieved, and then spoilt by adding a version of 'Cuckolds All In A Row' afterwards. This was apparently a favourite tune of King Charles II; unsurprisingly, as it would usually be playing in the background as he spent time on dance floors trying to seduce other men's wives. (I felt I had to add this tune, as I realised that for an album called 'Joy & Jealousy' it was a little light on the jealousy)

I wrote the 'New Way To Make Love' tune(s) myself, which is sort of cheating I suppose. But for this one I didn't want to spend forever finding something that fitted, and the eventual tune is basically a mash-up of various traditional tunes anyway.



John Peel

*Do you know John Peel
with his coat so grey?*

*Do you know John Peel
at the break of day?*

*Do you know John Peel
when he's far far away.*

*With his hounds and his horn
in the morning?*

***For the sound of his horn
brought me from my bed,
And the cry of his hounds
which he oftime led,
Peel's "View, Halloo!"***

***could awaken the dead,
Or the fox from his lair
in the morning.***

*Do you know that bitch
whose tongue was death?*

*Do you know her sons
of peerless faith?*

*Do you know that fox,
with his last breath
Cursed 'em all as he died
in the morning?*

For the sound of his horn, etc.

*Yes I know John Peel
and Ruby too
And Ranter and Royal
and Bellman as true,
From the drag to the chase,
from the chase to the view
From a view to a kill
in the morning*

For the sound of his horn, etc.

*And I've followed John Peel
both often and far,
Over rasper fence and
the gate and the bar,
From low Denton Holme
up to Scratchmere Scar,
Where we vie for the brush
in the morning*

For the sound of his horn, etc.

*Then here's to John Peel
with my heart and soul
Come fill to him
another strong bowl,
And we'll follow John Peel
through fair and through foul
While we're waked by his horn
in the morning.*

For the sound of his horn, etc.

BACKGROUND

A very popular song about a real life figure - a famous huntsman who lived in Cumberland (now Cumbria) around 1800 - that gave its name both to the BBC Radio 1 DJ (whose real name was John Ravenscroft) and to a James Bond short story by Ian Fleming called 'From A View To A Kill'.

Written in the Cumberland dialect, it's usually sung as 'D'y'e ken John Peel.', but that dialect didn't feel right for me to sing in, so I Artistic Licensed it.

This also features a tune called 'Alexandra Park' (which I got from Nick Barber's bumper book of English tunes) and another called 'Red House', which seems to think it's 'Greensleeves' but clearly isn't.



Joy & Jealousy

BACKGROUND

I found this in 'The Manual' (Popular Music of the Olden Time), simply entitled 'Dance Tune'. And I kept calling it that for a while, until I realised that it would just cause confusion. (You can dance to it - I have tried - but only in a litting way.) Here's what The Manual had to say:

The above dance tune is taken from the Musica Antiqua by John Stafford Smith. He transcribed it from a manuscript then in the possession of Francis Douce, Esq. (who bequeathed the whole of his manuscripts to the Bodleian Library), and calls it, "a dance tune of the reign of Edward II., or earlier."

And it's dated at around the year 1300. Which surprised me, as to my untutored ear it sounded much more modern. But then The Manual also went on to say that

music during this period was generally restricted to a church style that was deliberately complicated and difficult on the ear; and although the major scale we're familiar with was played by the 'vulgar musicians of the streets and villages' it was referred to as "il modo lascivo": the lascivious key.

Anyway, the tune needed a name, and I called it 'Joy & Jealousy'.



Allen & Sally

*It was in the evening of a wintry day,
Then just returning from a long campaign,
Allen, over tired and weary with the way,
Came home to see his Sally once again.*

*His tattered arms he carelessly threw down,
And viewed his Sally with enraptured eyes ;
But she received him with a modest frown,
She knew not Allen in his rough disguise.*

*His hair was knotted and his beard unshorn,
His tattered 'countrements about him hung ;
A tear of pleasure did his cheeks adorn,
And blessings fell in torrents from his tongue.*

*"Am I so altered by war's cruel trade,
That you your faithful Allen have forgot ;
Or has your heart upon some other strayed?
Ah! why escaped I from the murdering shot?"*

When thus he spoke, her wonted colour fled,

*She ran and sunk upon her Allen's breast,
All pale awhile, she looks like one that's dead
He kissed, she breathed, and all her love
confessed.*

*"Yes, my delight, though altered as thou art,
Reduced by war's dread carnage
to this state,
Thou art the golden treasure of my heart,
My long lost husband, and my
wished-for mate."*

BACKGROUND

I'm not one of those trad singers that revels in songs about everyone being miserable and then dying a horrific death. I found this fairly sentimental broadside about a soldier returning from the war and finding that his wife doesn't welcome him. Has she stopped caring? Has she found someone else?

No. She still loves him. She just didn't recognise him under his gigantic beard. They hug. They kiss. It's a happy ending. And I just thought it was rather sweet. Nothing more complicated than that, really.

The tune is 'Burton Ale'. Which is a lovely tune (that took a little bit of bending in places, but it fitted in the end) that I can't find any reference to, except on a gloriously bonkers album of traditional English tunes by James Last called 'Last of Old England', which I highly recommend to anyone who is as unhinged as I am.



Ironlegs & The High Caul Cap

BACKGROUND

This is a set of perhaps my two favourite tunes.

The first is 'Ironlegs', that I learnt from Tim Howes, who plays the accordion on this recording. (A note for accordion aficionados — for complicated reasons he was only able to record the right hand part, and the inferior left hand part is played by me, on a melodeon, so it's not his fault!)

The second is 'The High Caul Cap'. Or is it 'The Leathern Meets The Wattle-O'? Or 'The Leathern Meets The Bottle'? Or another name entirely that I recently heard? Anyway, I learnt it from Cat Kelly, who was playing it with one of her bands. And she called it 'Brown Bread'. Because the B part goes: "dum di dum dum... brown bread!" See?



Can You Wonder At Crime?

I've been thinking, of late I've been thinking
And my thoughts I can scarcely divine,
I've been thinking why people should wonder,
At London's great increase in crime.
Cries good old John Bull, "It's a poser,
There's something I can't understand,
And I'd fork out a trifle to know, sir,
Why crime should increase in our land ;
**We've peace, we have plenty of gold, sir,
Our banks are as full as can hold, sir,
We can buy up the world, so I'm told, sir,
Yet still there's an increase of crime."**

It's quite true what you say, Mr. Bull, sir,
We have riches in heaps stowed away,
Mouldy with age and mildew, sir,
Guarded by night and by day,
But like the ill-natured dog in the manger,
Your gold to yourself to confine,
Where a little would make
a great change, sir,
In our terrible increase in crime.

**For expenses you don't care a jot, sir,
You feed German princes the lot, sir,
While the poor man with hunger may rot, sir,
Mr. Bull, can you wonder at crime?**

Can you wonder at crime any longer,
When you see the police on their beat
Preventing the poor costermongers
From earning their bread in the street ;
While the rogue on the stool
he stands grinning
At the broad open face of the day,
Your pocket he will pick for a shilling,
And the law cannot touch him, he'll say.
**He defies all the East End Division,
He laughs with contempt and derision,
While you send the poor coster to prison -
Mr. Bull, can you wonder at crime?**

I am sure you will own, Mr. Bull, sir,
Temptation is hard to resist ;

Look at our poor needle girls, sir,
Trying their best to exist ;
Can you wonder at their prostitution,
When blood-sucking forms barely give
Enough to ward off destitution ;
A girl, though she's poor, she must live.
**The poor needle girl, God defend her
With feelings as keen and as tender
As your proud city ladies remember -
Mr. Bull, can you wonder at crime?**

Just think when you're drinking your wine, sir,
How the poor of England are fed,
While you with your rich friends can dine, sir,
It's a godsend for them to get bread ;
Just visit the house of the poor, sir,
Such a sight you will rarely behold,
The fever dens go and explore, sir,
And scatter your hoarded up gold ;
**For a little would soon break asunder
The chain that the poor suffer under,
Go listen to the great pang of hunger,
And never more wonder at crime.**

BACKGROUND

As far as I can tell this is a Victorian music hall song. I tracked down the tune from an American version - but it was in a major key. Perhaps a song this angry needed jolly music to make it palatable to a music hall audience, I don't know. Generally speaking, angry polemic tends to go down better with a little sugar.

But I shifted it into the minor, because that seemed more in keeping with the words; although I admit that it's perhaps less authentic to the spirit of music hall.

Now, maybe I've been looking in the wrong place, but I spent a long time looking for old English protest songs in the vein of the American twentieth century folk singers,

and I simply can't find them anywhere. There are songs of protest, but they're not these general calls to arms; they're nearly always specific, about a specific political issue.

Here the song's author lets rip with both barrels at the greed and hypocrisy of 'John Bull', the caricature of the typical English gent that proved so popular in Victorian magazines like Punch.

And I think it's tempting to draw parallels with England today, but the situation is actually very different: crime rates seem to be falling decade on decade (regardless of which political party is in charge), our banks are not as full as can hold anymore, and I personally think that there would be much better ways of helping those in need than simply 'scattering gold' (which, in a crime-ridden society, would probably go straight to the 'rogues on the stool').

What the song does illustrate, though, is a long English tradition of passionate campaigning for social justice. And that, I believe, is a tradition that's worth holding on to.



Amarillis

*I care not for these ladies
That must be wooed and prayed,
Give me kind Amarillis
The wanton country maid,
Nature art disdaineth,*

*Her beauty is her own,
For when we court and kiss,
She cries forsooth let go
But when we come where comfort is
She never will say no.*

*If I love Amarillis,
She gives me fruit and flowers,
But if we love these ladies,
We must give gifts in showers,
Give them gold that sell love,
Give me the nutbrown lass,
Who when we court and kiss,
She cries forsooth let go
But when we come where comfort is
She never will say no.*

*These ladies must have pillows,
And beds by strangers wrought,
Give me a bower of willows,
Of moss and leaves unbought.
And fresh Amarillis
With milk and honey fed,
Who when we court and kiss,
She cries forsooth let go
But when we come where comfort is
She never will say no.*

BACKGROUND

This song is usually better known as 'I Care Not For These Ladies', and was written by the composer Thomas Campion (1567-1620). But as I'm changing it significantly by removing the intricate lute part (which was probably considered more important than the singing at the time) I feel it's now basically a different song.

(I confess, I also changed the line 'we must give golden showers' to 'we must give gifts in showers' because, to me at least, 'golden showers' are associated with urolagnia, and I didn't want to giggle every time I sang it.)

There was a brief period, around the time of Shakespeare, when English composers like John Dowland, Philip Rosseter and Thomas Campion produced these brilliant lute songs, usually about love and frequently melancholy, that remind me so much of the modern singer / songwriters. And this song particularly sounded to me like it would really fit a much more modern arrangement, and I've been waiting for a chance to record it.

Like all the best old songs, it's extremely ambiguous. Underneath the romantic sheen, surely you have to question just how keen Amarillis really is about the author of this song, don't you? When they court and kiss, she cries 'let go'. But when they 'come where comfort is' (whatever that means) she never will say no.

Which, significantly, is not the same as actually saying yes.



The Dawning Of The Day

*It was pleasant and delightful
On a bright summer's morn
When the fields and the meadows
They were covered with corn
And the blackbirds and thrushes
On every green spray
And the larks they sang melodious
At the dawning of the day*

*And the larks, they sang melodious...
At the dawning of the day.*

*And we'd burned through every morning
And we sighed through each night
And we'd sang of larks' melodious
And we laughed till we cried
And I begged let me go with her
If she would not stay (she said)
"It was love and now it's over,
And there's nothing more to say."
It was love and now it's over...
And there's nothing more to say.*

*Oh the night it went on forever
As we argued and cried
As we laughed and held each other,
As I tried and I tried
But the night slipped away from me,
I could not keep hold
For she's leaving for another life
On the other side of the world
For she's leaving for another life...
On the other side of the world.*

*Oh it rained like the sky was angry
As I made my way home
And it seemed I was being beaten
By waves and by foam
And I fell into thick rain clouds
Of black and of grey
And I felt like I was drowning
As the rain it died away
And it felt like I was drowning...
As the rain it died away.*

*And then it was pleasant and delightful
On a bright summer's morn
When the fields and the meadows
Were covered with corn
And the blackbirds and thrushes
On every green spray
And the larks they sang melodious
At the dawning of the day
And the larks, they sang melodious...*

At the dawning of the day.

BACKGROUND

The first verse (and last) is well known from a song 'Pleasant & Delightful', often sung at folk sessions. About 5 years ago I had an idea for writing a new song based on it, taking the first verse, and so I gave it a different title (I think it's sometimes referred to as 'Dawning of the Day' anyway).

And a bit of context: when sung in folk sessions there's always some goof (i.e. me) that sings 'And the larks they played melodeons...' (the melodeon being a button accordion frequently used in Morris bands). Such larks.



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James Bell (House of Lyra 2013)



"JOY & JEALOUSY"

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- A photograph of a man with a beard, wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored shirt, holding a camera up to his eye. He is standing in front of a window with patterned curtains. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.
1. Robbing On The Highway
 2. The First of May, Four Up & Old Molly Oxford (*tuneset*)
 3. The Mermaid
 4. William Grismond's Downfall
 5. The New Way To Make Love
 6. John Peel
 7. Joy & Jealousy (*tune*)
 8. Allen & Sally
 9. Ironlegs & The High Caul Cap (*tuneset*)
 10. Can You Wonder At Crime?
 11. Amarillis
 12. The Dawning Of The Day

12 TRADITIONAL SONGS & TUNES
ARRANGED & RECORDED BY JAMES BELL