

Six Kings' Daughters

As sung by
Charles Dietz
09-01-1946 Monroe, WI

Copy 2 Version 7

Six Kings' Daughters

Now mount you on the milk-white steed, and I will mount the grey, And
we will ride to Lon-don town, and mar-ried we will be, be, be, and
mar-ried we will be.

Detailed description: This is a handwritten musical score on aged paper. It features three staves of music in a 3/4 time signature with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The melody is written on a treble clef staff, and the accompaniment is on a bass clef staff. The lyrics are written below the notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

As sung by
Dan Tanner

The Bold Outlandish Knight

O it was a bold out-land-ish Knight came woo-ing un-to .
me. O go bring me down your fath-er's gold, And like-wise moth-er's
fee, And we will ride un-to the north and there will mar-ried be O
be O be And there will mar-ried be.

Detailed description: This is a handwritten musical score on aged paper. It features four staves of music in a 3/4 time signature with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The melody is written on a treble clef staff, and the accompaniment is on a bass clef staff. The lyrics are written below the notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

(lyrics to Version A, as sung by Charles Dietz)

Verse 1.

“Now mount you on the milk-white steed,
And I will mount the grey,
And we will ride to London town
And married we will be, be, be,
And married we will be.”

Verse 2.

She mounted on the milk-white steed,
And he the dappled grey.
He meant not to ride to London town,
But he rode to they came to the sea, sea, sea,
He rode till they came to the sea.

Verse 3.

“Mount off, mount off, my pretty Polly,
And tie your horse to a tree.
Mount off, mount off, my pretty Polly,
For I’ve something to say to thee, thee, thee,
For I’ve something to say to thee.”

Verse 4.

“For ‘twas six kings’ daughters I drowned
here,
But you the seventh shall be, shall be,
And you the seventh shall be.”

Verse 5.

“Pull off, pull off those costly robes,
And lay them down by me.
They are too fine and too costly robes
To lay mouldering in the sea, the sea,
To lay mouldering in the sea.”

Verse 6.

She bade him turn him round-a-bout,
And face the green willow tree.
Then up jumped she so nimble and quick,
And plunged him into the sea, the sea,
And plunged him into the sea.

Verse 7.

“Lie there, lie there, you false-hearted knight,
Lie there instead of me,
For ‘tis six kings’ daughters you drowned here,
But the seventh has now drowned thee, thee,
thee,
But the seventh has now drowned thee.”

Verse 8.

She mounted again the milk-white steed,
While she led the dappled grey.
She rode till she came to her father’s house,
Three long hours before it was day, day, day,
Three long hours before it was day.

Verse 9.

“Be still, be still, my pretty Polly,
And tell no tales of me.
Your cage shall be made of the fines of gold,
And shall hang on the green willow tree, tree,
tree,
And shall hang on the green willow tree.”

Transcriptions and lyrics from the Helene Stratman-Thomas Collection.

Critical Commentary

Transcriptions by Peters, p. 199, and HST

HST notes:

In the Professional Papers series:

(Child no. 4)

This ballad appears in Child as Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight and May Collin; in Percy as The Outlandish Knight; in Motherwell as May Colvin. Most of the older printings are from Scottish collections or manuscripts. Collectors have found this song under different names in various sections of the United States. Concerning its widespread origin, Child says: "Of all ballads this has perhaps obtained the widest circulation. It is nearly as well known to the southern as to the northern nations of Europe. It has extraordinary currency in Poland. The Germans, Low and High, and the Scandinavians, preserve it, in a full and evidently ancient form, even in the tradition of the generation." To avoid confusion in reading the song, it is well to note that both the girl and the parrot are named Polly.

Version A, "Six King's Daughters," sung by Charles Dietz, age 75, Monroe, 1946.

Mr. Dietz learned the ballad from his English mother who brought it to Wisconsin with her from New York state. He remarked that this and other ballads which he sang were not current songs in southern Wisconsin – "I cannot recall ever hearing them except in our family. The most certainly did not come to me from anywhere in the South, either directly or indirectly. They are purely, as I have said, either English or Scotch."

Version B, "The Bold Outlandish Knight," sung by Dan Tanner, age 75, 1941.

Melody and text taken down from a recording made by Mr. Tanner's nephew Paul H. Curtis, a University [of Wisconsin] medical student.

Mr. Tanner was born in Bangor Maine and spent his boyhood in Michigan. When a youth, he worked for several years in Kelly's Mills near Wausau, Wisconsin. Mr. Tanner learned "The Bold Outlandish Knight" from his mother.

Editor's notes:

The Stratman-Thomas versions of this song do not explicitly include a conversation between a girl and a parrot, although the version above refers to a golden cage in the final verse. Many other versions do include a bird, hence such divergent titles as "Miss Mary's Parrot." McNeil compares this to Child ballad number 4, "Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight," and claims that this is one of the most popular or widespread of the Child ballads, both in Europe and the United States (McNeil 144). Origins of this song may come from legends of "a twelfth-century demon king of the Lower Rhine region" (McNeil 145). McNeil continues, "Whatever its origins, there can be little doubt that nineteenth-century English broadsides played a large part in keeping the ballad alive in the British Isles, for it was a favorite with broadside printers of the era" (McNeil 145). Parodies have also been found in some 19th century minstrel songbooks (McNeil 146).

Alternate titles/related songs: “The Outlandish Knight,” “Billy Came Over the Main White Ocean,” “The Cage of Ivory and Gold,” “Castle by the Sea,” “The Daughter of Old England,” “The Errant Knight,” “The False-Hearted Knight,” “The False Lover,” “Go Steal to Me Your Father’s God,” “He Followed Me Up and He Followed Me Down,” “If I Take Off My Silken Stay,” “Little Golden,” “The Knight of the Northland,” “A Man in the Land,” “Miss Mary’s Parrot,” “The Ocean Wave,” “The Gates of Ivory,” “The Seventh Sister,” “The Old Beau,” “Pretty Polly,” “Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight,” “May Collin,” “May Colvin,” “False Sir John.”

Sources:

- Campbell, Olive Dame and Cecil J. Sharp, collectors. *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians: Comprising 122 Songs and Ballads, and 323 Tunes*. New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1917.
- McNeil, W.K., ed. *Southern Folk Ballads*, vol. 2. The American Folklore Series, ed. W.K. McNeil. Little Rock: August House Publishers, 1987. “The Seventh Sister”
- Peters, Harry B., ed. *Folk Songs out of Wisconsin: An Illustrated Compendium of Words and Music*. Madison, WI: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1977.
- Randolph, Vance, collector and editor. *Ozark Folksongs*. Vol. I. Columbia, Mo.: State Historical Society of Missouri, 1946-50.
- Scarborough, Dorothy. *A Song Catcher in Southern Mountains; American Folk Songs of British Ancestry*. New York, Columbia University Press, 1937.
- Sandburg, Carl. *American Songbag*. New York, Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1927.
- Wyman, Loraine, collector and editor. *Lonesome Tunes: Folk Songs from the Kentucky Mountains*. Pianoforte accompaniment by Howard Brockway. New York: H.W. Gray Co., 1916. Kentucky mountain song, variant of Lady Isabel and the elf knight.

K.G.