

Woman From Trenton

As sung by
Hamilton Lobdell
06-24-1941 Mukwonago, WI

Verse



³ [There] was an old wo-man in Tren-ton _____ whose sto-ry I will tell, _____ she



loved her old man dear-ly, _____ but a-noth-er one twice as well. _____

Refrain



Ti-ter-ry eye-ri eh-ri oh-ray, tit-ter-y eye-ri-al _____

Verse 1.

[There] was an old woman in Trenton whose story I will tell,
She loved her old man dearly, but another one twice as well.

(refrain)

Verse 2.

She went unto the doctors, to see if she could find
Oh anything thing at all that could make her old man blind.

(refrain)

Verse 3.

She brought him home a narrow bone made him eat it all,
"And now," says he, "my dearest dear, I can't see you at all."

(refrain)

Verse 4.

The old man says he, "I'd drowned myself if I could find the way."
The old woman says she, "I'll go with you for fear you'll go astray."

(refrain)

Verse 5.

They walked along side by side until they reached the shore,
The old man says he, "I'll not drown myself until you push me o'er."

(refrain)

Verse 6.

The old woman gave a running leap all for to push him in,
The old man, he nimbly stepped aside and head-long she went in.

(refrain)

Verse 7.

The old man being kind hearted and prayed that she would swim,
He went and cut him a very long pole and shoved her further in.

(refrain)

Verse 8.

The old woman being about to sink, she gave a drowning squall,
"And now," says she, "My dearest dear, I can't see you at all."

(refrain)

Refrain

Tittery eye-ri eh-ri oh-ray,
Tittery eye-ri-al.

Critical Commentary

Transcriptions by MB, Peters, p. 172, and HST.

HST notes:

In the Professional Papers series:

Sung by Noble B. Brown, age 61, Millville, 1946

The Old Woman in London has been collected by Eddy in Ohio as The Old Woman of Slapsadam. A negro version collected by Lomax begins: "Once I knowed old lady, Round Tennessee did dwell."

The old woman may change her location but the incidents of the story remain the same. In the last verse the old man's age may change from sixty-four to seventy-four, but it must end with "four" to rhyme with "more."

Editor's notes:

Linscott writes that her version and "'Johnny Sands' are said to be founded on a folk tale" (255), but does not elaborate further.

Alternate titles/related songs: "A Cruel Wife," "An Old Woman's Story," "The Wife of Kelso," "The Wily Auld Carl," "The Old Woman of Slapsadam," "Johnny Sands," "The Auld Man and the Churnstaff."

Sources:

Doerflinger, William Main, coll. *Shantymen and Shantyboys: Songs of the Sailor and Lumberman*.

New York: Macmillan, 1951. "The wife of Kelso (The wily Auld Carle)," different tune.

Eddy, Mary O., coll. and arr. *Ballads and Songs from Ohio*. Hanford, N.Y.: J. J. Augustin, 1939.

Flanders, Helen Hartness, Elizabeth Flanders Ballard, George Brown, and Phillips Barry, colls., trans., and eds. *The New Green Mountain Songster: Traditional Folk Songs of Vermont*.

New Haven: Yale University Press; London: H. Milford: Oxford University Press, 1939.

"A Cruel Wife," text only.

Linscott, Eloise Hubbard, coll. and ed. *Folk Songs of Old New England*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1939.

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.

Scarborough, Dorothy. *A Song Catcher in Southern Mountains; American Folk Songs of British Ancestry*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1937. "Johnny Sands."

Sharp Cecil J., and Maud Karpeles, colls. *Eighty English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. London: Faber and Faber, 1968. "The Rich Old Lady."