

Sweet William

As sung by
Winifred Bundy

Originally in eb minor
07-23-1946 Madison, WI

The musical score is written on a single treble clef staff in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. It consists of four lines of music, each with a measure number (1, 4, 8, 12) at the beginning. The lyrics are written below the notes. The melody is simple and folk-like, with some phrasing slurs and a final cadence at the end.

All o'er the do - wn the fleet lie moored, their ban - ners strea - ming
to the wind, when black - eyed Su - san came on board, "Oh where shall I ___ my
true love find? Tell me it jo - vi - al sail - ors tell me true, does my sweet
Wil - liam, ___ does my sweet Wil - liam sail a - mong your crew?" ___

Verse 1.

All o'er the down the fleet lie moored,
Their banners streaming to the wind,
When black-eyed Susan came on board,
"Oh where shall I my true love find?
Tell me it jovial sailors tell me true,
Does my sweet William,
Does my sweet William sail among your crew?"

Verse 2.

William, high upon the yard
Rocked by the billow to and fro,
As soon as her sweet voice he heard
He cast his eyes and looked below.
The cord slides swiftly through his glowing hands,
As quick as lightning,
As quick as lightning on the deck he stands.

Verse 3.

"Susan, Susan lovely dear
My vow shall ever true remain.
Let me kiss off that falling tear,
We only part to meet again.
Change as ye list ye winds, my heart shall be
The faithful compass,
The faithful compass that still points to thee."

Verse 4.

"Believe not what the land men say,
Who tempt with doubt thy constant mind.
They'll tell thee sailors when away
In every port a mistress find,
Yes, yes believe them when they tell thee so;
For thou art present,
For thou art present where so e'er I go."

Verse 5.

The boatswain gave the dreadful word
The sails their swelling bosoms spread,
"No longer must she stay aboard."
They kissed, [she sighed,
He hung his head;
"Adieu," she cries,
"Adieu" she cries and waved her lily hand.]*

*Additional text from *English Song Book* by Harold Scott
pub. by Robert M. McBride New York, NY. 1926

Critical Commentary

Transcriptions by MB and HST.

HST notes:

In the Professional Papers series:

Black Eyed Susan, sung by Mr. Includon - The words by Gay, p. 188-189 in Lydian Leanes or The Gentleman's Pocket Melodist, the airs selected etc. by T. Williams. London, Published by T. Williams, n.d.

From appearance of type looks like early edition of ...[illegible]

In 58 English Songs by Composers Chiefly Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century selected and arr. With Piano Accompaniment by John Hullah. Under title All in the Downs. Richard Leveridge, arr. By John Hullah, John Gay.

Sweet William's Farewell to Black-eyed Susan (p. 486) in Songs and Ballads section of The Poems of John Gay Vol. X of The Works of English Poets with prefaces, biographical and critical by Dr. Samuel Johnson. ... London 1810. ... From Samuel Johnson's Preface: Born in 1688 in or near Barnstaple. Died Dec. 1731 (p. 431). As a poet, he cannot be rated very high. He was, as I once heard a female critic remark, "of a lower order". He had not, in any degree, the mens diviniior [?], the dignity of genius (p. 432).

Chappell - Vol. 2 p. 144 1893 Ed.

Sung by Winifred Bundy, Age 62, Madison, 1946.

Miss Bundy learned this song from her grandfather, James D. Morgan, who died when she was eight. Her Uncle Will Morgan helped her recall the words. [crossed out]: I have been unable to find any printing of the song which includes the music. The modal character of the melody indicated that it may date back to the sixteenth or seventeenth century.

The text is printed in The Sailor Boy's Songster, published in Philadelphia, and The Universal Songster, published in London. The words are by John Gay (1688-1732), who is known for his collaboration with Dr. Christopher Pepusch in the writing of Beggar's Opera. The music, possibly an adaptation of an Irish traditional tune, is by Richard Leveridge (1670-1758), noted English bass profundo.

[footnote for Leveridge's dates: *Grove's Dict. Of Music and Musicians*]

References: Universal Songster, I, p. 361; Sailor Boy's Songster, pp. 50-51

Alternate titles/related songs: "Black-Eyed Susan," "Sweet William," "Oh Captain, Captain, Tell Me True," "All in the Downs."

Editor's notes:

The reference to "the Downs" in the first line may be an area in England. The Oxford English Dictionary says the Downs are "the part of the sea within the Goodwin Sands, off the east coast of Kent, a famous rendezvous for ships. (It lies opposite to the eastern termination of the North Downs.)"

Sources:

Bantock, Granville, ed. *One Hundred Songs of England*. Boston: Oliver Ditson Company, 1914.

"Black-eyed Susan."

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.

Wier, Albert E. *The Book of a Thousand Songs: The World's Largest Collection of the Songs of the People, Containing More than a Thousand Old and New Favorites*. New York: Mumlil Publishing, 1918. "Black-eyed Susan."

K.G.