

There Was a Rich Old Man

As sung by
Pearl Jacobs Borusky
07-26-1941 Pearson, WI



Verse 1.

There was a rich old farmer
Lived in the country high.
He had an only daughter
On whom I cast my eye.
She was so tall and slender,
So delicate and so fair,
No other girl in the country
With her I could compare.

Verse 2.

I asked her if it made any difference
If I crossed over the plains.
She said, "It made no difference"
If I'd come back again.
She promised she'd be true to me,
Until our parting time.
So we kissed, shook hands and parted
And I left my girl behind.

Verse 3.

Straightway to old Missouri,
To Pikesville, I did go.
Where work and money were plentiful
And the whiskey it did flow,
Where work and money were plentiful
And the girls all treated me kind.
But the girl I left behind me
Was always on my mind.

Verse 4.

One day while I was out walking
Down by the public square
The mail boat had arrived
And the postman met me there.
He handed me a letter
Which gave me to understand
That the girl I left behind me
Was married to another man.

Verse 5.

I advanced a few steps forward
Full knowing these words to be true.
My mind being ben on rambling
I didn't know what to do.
My mind being bent on rambling,
This wide world to see o'er,
I left me dear old parents
Perhaps to see no more.

Transcription and lyrics from the Helene Stratman-Thomas Collection.

Critical Commentary

Transcriptions by Treat, no. 40, and Peters, p. 115.

Editor's notes:

Pearl Jacobs Borusky sang this song for Helene Stratman Thomas in 1941 and for Asher treat in 1936.

Alternate titles/related songs: "My Parents Treated Me Tenderly," "The Wealthy Merchant."

Sources:

Gardner, Emelyn Elizabeth, and Geraldine Jencks Chickering, collectors and editors. *Ballads and Songs of Southern Michigan*. Hatboro, Pa.: Folklore Associates, 1967. Reprinted from original, c1939. "The Wealthy Merchant" has some similarities

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.

Sharp, Cecil J., collector. *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. London: Oxford University Press, 1932. "My Parents Treated Me Tenderly," different tune

Treat, Asher E. "Kentucky Folksong in Northern Wisconsin." *The Journal of American Folklore* 52, no. 203 (Jan.-Mar. 1939): 1-51.

K.G.