

# Baggage Coach Ahead

As performed by  
**Bessie Gordon**  
08-13-1941 Schofield, WI

(Organ)

C



'Twas a long dreary night and the train rattled on all the passengers had gone to



bed. \_\_\_\_\_ Ex - cept a poor man with a babe in his arms and he fondled it



close to his breast. \_\_\_\_\_ The in - nocent one be - gan cry - ing in vain as



though its poor heart would break. \_\_\_\_\_ "Throw him out," said a man, \_\_\_\_\_ "don't



let 'em \_\_\_\_\_ stay here, he's keep - ing \_\_\_\_\_ us all a - wake." \_\_\_\_\_ "Put him out," said a -



noth - er, "don't keep it in here, we've paid for our berths and want rest." \_\_\_\_\_ But



ne - ver a word said the man with the child as he fondled it close to his breast. \_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_ "Oh where is its mo - ther \_\_\_\_\_ go take it to her," a kind wo - man soft - ly

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55 F C G7

said. \_\_\_\_\_ "I wish that I could," was the sad man's re - ply "but she's dead in the

62 C G7

coach a - head." \_\_\_\_\_ As \_\_\_\_\_ the train rolled on - wards \_\_\_\_\_ a hus - band

70 C

sat in tears, \_\_\_\_\_ thin - king of the hap - py time of just those few short

79 G7

years. \_\_\_\_\_ Ba - by's face brings pic - tures \_\_\_\_\_ of one who now lays dead, \_\_\_\_\_

88 C G7 C

\_\_\_\_\_ ba - by's tears can't wa - ken her in the bag - gage coach a - head. \_\_\_\_\_

## Lyrics

'Twas a long dreary night  
 And the train rattled on  
 All the passengers had gone to bed.  
 Except a poor man  
 With a babe in his arms  
 And he fondled it close to his breast.

The innocent one  
 began crying in vain  
 As though its poor heart would break.  
 "Throw him out," said a man,  
 "Don't let him stay here,  
 He's keeping us all awake."  
 "Put him out," said another,  
 "Don't keep it in here,  
 We've paid for our berths and want rest."  
 But never a word  
 Said the man with the child  
 As he fondled it close to his breast.

"Oh where is its mother  
 Go take it to her,"  
 A kind woman softly said.  
 "I wish that I could,"  
 Was the sad man's reply  
 "But she's dead in the coach ahead."

As the train rolled onward  
 A husband sat in tears,  
 Thinking of the happy time  
 Of just those few short years.

Baby's face brings pictures  
 Of one who now lays dead,  
 Baby's tears can't waken her  
 In the baggage coach ahead.

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## Critical Commentary

Transcriptions by MB and HST.

### HST notes:

In the Professional Papers series:

*In response to general demand Chorus printed - copyright 1896 by Handy [?], Harland [?], and Co - assigned 1924 to Edw. B. Marts[?] Music Co. Used by permission.*

*In Bag. Coach ahead was one of the songs sung in vaudeville circuits to the acc of colored pictures thrown [?] on the screen.*

*Mrs. Bessie Gordon, age circa 40, Schofield. Learned the song from her mother - Mrs. Gordon runs a crossroads tavern about 8 feet square. She sings for her patrons and accompanies herself on a reed organ which she has cut down to fit under the bar.*

### Editor's notes:

Randolph writes that this song is said to have been written by Gussie L. Davis, "a Negro resident of Kansas City," about a true event: Dr. James B. Watson, whose wife died in 1869, and whose 2-year-old daughter Nellie cried on the trip to take her body from Kansas City to Pennsylvania (Randolph 163). Another source (Lucile Morris, Springfield Mo. *News and Leader*, Sept. 30, 1934) wrote that it was "written about 1894 by a Pullman porter, and is believed to have been drawn from his experience" (Randolph 164). These are not necessarily conflicting accounts, as Davis may have been a Pullman porter.

### Sources:

Kennedy, Charles O'Brien. *American Ballads - Naughty, Ribald, and Classic*. New York: Fawcett Publications, 1952. Text only.

*Literary Digest*, Nov 13, 1915.

*Old Time Songs and Poems* 1, no. 1 (1967): p. 6. Text only.

Randolph, Vance, coll. and ed. *Ozark Folksongs*. Vol. IV. Columbia, Mo.: State Historical Society of Missouri, 1946-50. Text only.

*Songs of the Pioneers*. Camdenton, Mo: Albert E. Brumley, 1970.

Spaeth, Sigmund Gottfried. *Read 'Em and Weep: The Songs You Forgot to Remember*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page, and Co., 1927.

K.G.