

The Single Girl

Informant/Performer:
Mrs. Ellie Johnson
Hot Springs, NC, 1916

Source:
Olive Dame Campbell and Cecil J. Sharp
*English Folk Songs from the
Southern Appalachians*
New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1917

When I was sin - gle, I went dressed so fine.

Now I am mar - ried, go rag - ged all the time.

Chorus:

I wish I was a sin - gle girl a - gain, O Lord,

don't I wish I was a sin - gle girl a - gain.

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| 2. When I was single, my shoes they did squeak,
Now I am married, my shoes they do leak.
(Chorus) | 6. Wash 'em and dress 'em and send 'em to school,
Long comes that drunkard and calls them a fool.
(Chorus) |
| 3. When I was single, eat biscuits and pie.
Now I am married, eat cornbread or die.
(Chorus) | 7. When he comes in, it's a curse and a row,
Knocking down the children and pulling out my hair.
(Chorus) |
| 4. Dishes to wash and spring to go to,
Now I am married, I've everything to do.
(Chorus) | 8. When I was single, marryin' was my crave,
Now I am married, I'm troubled to my grave.
(Chorus) |
| 5. Three little babes crying for bread,
With none to give them, I'd rather be dead.
(Chorus) | |

Verses compiled from Campbell and Sharp and from
Lomax, Alan, *Folk Songs of North America*.

Background Information

*Come all you Virginia girls and listen to my noise,
Don't go with them Tennessee boys,
For if you do, your fortune will be
Hoecake and hominy and sassafras tea.*

Thus the old pioneer song warned the lowland girls to steer clear of the tall young hunters who came down from Tennessee Gap telling stories of Indian fights and bear hunts across the mountains to the west. These men were hunters and fighters. They left the rest of the work to the women, who chopped wood, carried water, and did the ploughing and planting with a rifle handy in case of Indian attacks. Babies came every year...

After years of isolation in the hills, far from the stores, the people learned to do without shoes, and often went barefoot even when the snow lay deep in the laurel thickets. Men dressed in buckskin and women in homespun, and the log cabins, built of unfinished green logs, were unchinked... The hand-hewed shingles curled after a season or so, so that the roofs leaked. The wind blew in through the cracks in the floor in the winter, and the dirt and mud sifted in everywhere, no matter what efforts the housewife made with her little broom of sedge grass.

In the time of illness you took strong home remedies and kept your mouth shut about your pain. When babies came, an old midwife might attend who believed that "it would ease your pain, honey, if you lay on your side and hollered." No wonder a leathern-faced old mountain woman warned her granddaughter against marriage. "Don't do hit, honey, don't do hit." She was thinking of the ways of the mountain men.