



Songs & Ballads



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This song was sung by Mrs. Sarah Finchum, of **Elkton**, in Rockingham County, Virginia, and was collected on November 16, 1915, by Miss Martha M. Davis.

"The Trooper and the Maid"

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

*"There was a man a coming from the south,
It being dark and gloomy,
She knew the soldier by his horse
Because she loved him dearly."*

This ballad is a Virginia version of "The Trooper and the Maid", which is **#299** in the **Child** Collection. This is taken from Arthur Kyle Davis, Jr.'s **Traditional Ballads of Virginia**. I have presented this ballad verbatim as it was

No. 51 (A)

THE TROOPER AND MAID

Collected by Miss Martha M. Davis; sung by Mrs. Sarah Finchum, of Elkton, Virginia;
Rockingham County; November 16, 1915.

The musical score is written on five staves. The first staff is in 3/4 time and contains the first line of the melody. The second staff is in 4/4 time and contains the second line. The third staff is in 4/4 time and contains the third line. The fourth staff is in 4/4 time and contains the fourth line. The fifth staff is in 4/4 time and contains the fifth line. The lyrics are written below the staves.

There was a man a - com - ing from the south, It
be - ing dark and gloom - y, She knew the sol - dier
by his horse Be - cause she loved him dear - ly.
Dear - ly, O dear - ly, She knew the sol - dier
by his horse Be - cause she loved him dear - ly.

collected by Miss Davis, even though it seems that some of the verses have become garbled. It's not clear to me why the soldier should have a "lily-white hand" rather than the lady. And the same is true of his "lily-white robe". In another Virginia version, from Mr. George Hart of Konnarock, the verse goes:

*"She pulled off her costly robe,
And folded it onto the table,
And he pulled off his bugle coat
And jumped in the bed with the lady."*

The version from the Sodom Laurel area of Madison County, North Carolina, is somewhat different. Here is Sheila Adams singing "**A Soldier Traveling From the North**".

In this version, the disrobing verse goes:

*"Well she pulled off her blue silk gown,
And she laid it across the table.
And he pulled off his uniform suit,
And he hopped in the bed with the lady."*

The last verse is often garbled. In Mrs. Finchum's version, the line is "When gray goose quills turn to silver pins" In the version that Sheila Adams sings, it goes, "When silver bells and conch's shall stand" Perhaps the earlier versions had something like "when silver bells turn/grow cockle shells" Mr. Stockton's version, mentioned below has "when conk shells turn to silver bells".

The verse about what disturbs their sleep varies from bugles blowing to cocks crowing to this very unusual version by Mrs. Finchum which has the "war drum beating". The soldier then says that he must "up and away", and the lady immediately bewails his parting and cries out that she is "ruin't" forever.

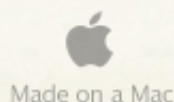
And thus we have another version of the classic tale of soldiers and maidens and what usually happens between them. Here is some discussion of this ballad by [Malcolm Douglas](#) on the Mudcat, with some additional links. And [HERE](#) is the music and words for a version sung by Jean Redpath.

Cecil Sharp and Maud Karpeles did not find any Virginia examples but did find a few down in North Carolina and Tennessee. Here is one from Mrs. Tom Rice, and one from [T. Jeff Stockton](#) (and [HERE](#)).

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