Coal Creek Troubles

Coal Creek Troubles
(Jilson Setters?)

My song is founded on the truth,
In poverty we stand.
How hard the millionaire will crush
Upon the laboring man.
The miner's toiling under ground
To earn his daily bread;
To clothe his wife and children
And see that they are fed.

Some are from Kentucky,
The place known as my birth;
As true and honest-hearted man
As ever trod this earth.
The Governor sent the convicts here
And works them in the bank;
The captain and his soldiers
Are leading by in rank.

Although the mines are guarded,
The miners true and fair,
They mean to deal out justice,
A living they declare.
The corruption of Buchanan
Brought the convicts here,
Just to please the rich man
And take the miner's share.

The miners acted manly
When they turned the convicts loose;
You see, they did not kill them
And gave them no abuse.
But when they brought the convicts
They boldly marched them forward;
The miners soon were gathered
And placed them under guard.

Soon the miners did agree
To let them take their place;
And wait the legislature
To act upon the case.

The law has made no effort
To lend a helping hand;
To help the struggling miner
Or move the convict band.

Buchanan acted cruelly
To put them out to toil.
He says he has not room enough
For the convicts in the wall.
He has no law to work them
Only in the pen.
Why should they be on public work,
To rob the laboring man?

I am in sympathy with the miners,
As every one should be.
In other states they work free labor,
And why not Tennessee?
The miners true and generous
In many works and ways,
We all should treat them kindly,
Their platform we should praise.

The Lord in all His wisdom
Will lend a helping haud,
And if we hold out faithful,
God will strive with man.
He gives us happy sunshine,
A great and glorious light;
He'll give us food and raiment
If we'll only serve him right.

(alternative 7'th verse from Betty Litton Davis, TN who reported learning
the song in 1891, when the Troubles were at their height)

God Bless the Knights of Labor
With all their wit and skill;
Their efforts to accomplish,
Intentions to fulfill.
I am in sympathy with the miner
As everyone should be,
Other states they work free labor,
And why not Tennessee?

From Only a Miner, Green
Note: Collected from Jilson Setters (James William Day) in 1937. About one
of the pivotal incidents in American labor history.
Recorded by Mike Seeger, Folkways FH5273

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