Kate and Her Horns

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You that in merriment delight,
Pray listen unto what I recite
So shall you satisfaction find,
Will cure a melancholy mind.

A damsel fair lived in Colchester,
At length a clothier courted her
Six months apace, both night and day
But still this damsel answered: "Nay."

At length this maid gave her consent
To marry him, and straight they went
Unto her parents then, and who
Gave their consent and their liking too

But see the cursed fruits of gold,
He left his loyal love to hold
Her grief and sorrow all compassed mind
While he a greater fortune found

A lawyer's daughter, fair and bright,
Her parents joy and their hearts delight
He did resolve to make his spouse,
Denying all his former vows

Kate knew each and every night
He came to his true love, Nancy by name
Sometimes at ten o'clock or more
Kate to a tanner, went therefore

She borrowed there an old cowhide
With crooked horns, both large and wide
With hairy hide horns on her head
That near three feet asunder spread

Kate to a lonesome path did stray,
And at length, the clothier came that way
He was so sorely scared of her,
She looked so like old Lucifer

And when he saw her long black tail

He strove to run, but his feet did fail
Kate quickly seized him by the throat
And said with grim and doleful note

You leave poor Kate, as I do hear
To wed the lawyer's daughter dear
You shall whether you will or no,
Into my gloomy regions go

Oh, Master Devil, spare my life,
And I will make young Kate my wife
See that you do, the Devil exclaimed
Or else you'll hear from me again.

He went to Kate and married her,
For fear of doleful Lucifer
Her friends and parents thought it strange
That there was such a sudden change

She never let her parents know,
Nor any other person too
Till they a year had married been,
She told it at her lying-in

It pleased the women to the heart,
They said she fairly played her part
Her husband laughed as well as they,
It was a merry and a happy day.

This song is found as a broadside in Britain, although it appears not to have been collected from oral tradition there. This version is based on the set sung by the late George Edwards of Roscoe, N.Y., a Catskill singer with a fine repertoire of traditional ballads. It is printed in Norman Cazden's "Abelard Song Book." A very literary piece, it is interesting to note that this recent text is almost identical to the set given by the unknown soldier of Sandgate, Vermont, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, who published his Green Mountain Songster as long ago as 1823. It is also very close to another Vermont text, from Fred Atwood of Dover, collected by Margaret MacArthur in 1961.

Recorded by John Roberts and Tony Barrand on "Mellow with Ale from the Horn", FHR-04
DT #452
Laws N22
DC

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