Lord Thomas and Fair Ellender (3)

Lord Thomas and Fair Ellender (3)

First time recorded:

O fair Ellen she got houses and land,
The brown girl she've got none;
I really do think 'tis too hard for me
To marry that rich young girl.

<spoken: Weren't he a clever young feller, Lord Thomas
To wed two brides all in one day?>
He got married to Ellen. He got back and the brown girl
Looked at him so sad
And he stuck her right through with a sword.
Is you blind or can't not see
Your own heart's blood run down by your side?>
Come riddle, come riddle, my bold forester
O wasn't Lord Bateman the cleverest young fellow
That ever the sun shone on?
<spoken: To wed two brides all in one day.>

Second time recorded:

O Fair Ellen she got houses and land
The Brown Girl she've got none,
Or rather you loved her little finger
Nor you did her whole body.

Well the Brown Girl now she set to one side
Because she was now very poor,
Wasn't she the handsomest young woman there
That ever the sun shone on?

Well, Fair Ellen she had houses and lands
She stepped right into the Lord's arms
She went to the weddin' bobbin' red white and blue.

<spoken: When she went to the weddin', Ellen come back. The Brown Girl was one of the bridesmaids. The Brown Girl come in and Lord Hallerton said he's sooner have the Brown Girl. Well, they said, go and kiss your bride. before he kiss his bride, Sweet Ellender, he drawed the sword from his side and he stuck her through the side. Then he looked up and said:
Is you blind or can't you see

Your own heart's blood a-runnin' down by the side?>

Child #73 (with some fragments of Child 53 tossed in)
From Travellers Songs from England and Scotland, MacColl and Seeger
Collected from Mrs. Caroline Hughes, 1963, 1967)

note: This version points out with particular clarity, why folk-music collection and study doesn't lend itself to careful logic and great precision. The first recording session was in 1963, the next in 1967. The singer clearly felt that both recordings were of the same song; the spoken narrative and the sung portion are inseparable. The whole thing is--for better or worse--a traditional folk ballad, transmitted orally. And that's what field collectors collect. RG

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