

Girl I Left Behind Me, The

1700's

Also known as *The Girl I Left Behind*

Another tracing of how songs developed and changed over time.

Although probably an old Irish tune, *The Girl I Left Behind Me* became a popular British marching song under the title *Brighton Camp*. In the years before the American Revolution, it was often played when a British naval vessel set sail or an army unit left for service abroad.

The Girl I Left Behind Me was adopted by the Americans and has become a traditional Army song especially associated with the Seventh Infantry. It was also a favorite in the 1800's with the troops at Fort Snelling, located in St. Paul, Minnesota. The tune is easy to play on the fife.

Today *The Girl I Left Behind Me* is played at the United States Military Academy at West Point as part of the medley for the cadets' final formation for graduation.

The Girl I Left Behind Me has many variations and verses. Here is one example:

All the dames of France are fond and free
And Flemish lips are really willing
Very soft the maids of Italy
And Spanish eyes are so thrilling
Still, although I bask beneath their smile,
Their charms will fail to bind me
And my heart falls back to Erin's isle
To the girl I left behind me.

The song was popular in the US regular army, who adopted it during the War of 1812 after they heard a British prisoner singing it.

I'm lonesome since I crossed the hill
And over the moor that's sedgy
Such lonely thoughts my heart do fill
Since parting with my Betsey
I seek for one as fair and gay
But find none to remind me
How sweet the hours I passed away
With the girl I left behind me

My mind her image still retains,
Whether asleep or waking;
I hope to see my dear again,
For her my heart is breaking:
But if e'er I chance to go that way,
And that she has not resign'd me;

I'll reconcile my mind and stay,
With the girl I left behind me.

During the Civil War the Confederates had their own version:

Old Abe lies sick, Old Abe lies sick
Old Abe lies sick in bed
He's a lying dog, a crying dog
And I wish that he was dead
Jeff Davis is a gentleman
Abe Lincoln is a fool
Jeff Davis rides a big white horse
And Lincoln rides a mule

LYRICS

I'm lonesome since I crossed the hill,
And o'er the moorland sedgy
Such heavy thoughts my heart do fill,
Since parting with my Betsey
I seek for one as fair and gay,
But find none to remind me
How sweet the hours I passed away,
With the girl I left behind me.

O ne'er shall I forget the night,
the stars were bright above me
And gently lent their silvery light
when first she vowed to love me
But now I'm bound to Brighton camp
kind heaven then pray guide me
And send me safely back again,
to the girl I left behind me

Her golden hair in ringlets fair,
her eyes like diamonds shining
Her slender waist, her heavenly face,
that leaves my heart still pining
Ye gods above oh hear my prayer
to my beauteous fair to find me
And send me safely back again,
to the girl I left behind me

The bee shall honey taste no more,
the dove become a ranger
The falling waters cease to roar,
ere I shall seek to change her
The vows we made to heaven above

shall ever cheer and bind me
In constancy to her I love,
the girl I left behind me.

Another Version:

The hours sad I left a maid
A lingering farewell taking
Whose sighs and tears my steps delayed
I thought her heart was breaking
In hurried words her name I blest
I breathed the vows that bind me
And to my heart in anguish pressed
The girl I left behind me

Then to the east we bore away
To win a name in story
And there where dawns the sun of day
There dawned our sun of glory
The place in my sight
When in the host assigned me
I shared the glory of that fight
Sweet girl I left behind me

Though many a name our banner bore
Of former deeds of daring
But they were of the day of yore
In which we had no sharing
But now our laurels freshly won
With the old one shall entwine me
Singing worthy of our size each son
Sweet girl I left behind me

The hope of final victory
Within my bosom burning
Is mingling with sweet thoughts of thee
And of my fond returning
But should I never return again
Still with thy love I'll bind me
Dishonors breath shall never stain
The name I leave behind me

Both versions are from "The American Song Treasury" and
Best Loved Songs of The American People and
**Folk Songs of Old New England*

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