Up in the North

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Up in the north there lived a brisk couple
Where young men and maidens a-courting do go
Always a-courting but never talked of marrying
Until this young girl she began for to say

"Young man, young man, what is it you mean
Of courting I'm weary, I'm resolved to get married
Or else from your company I must refrain"
"And then I must own, I do love you dearly
But as for to marry I don't feel inclined

When a man he gets wed
His joys are all fled
He's free from all liberty
Bound down towards slavery
So whilst I am single
I wish you goodnight"

"Oh there's one thing, dear John, I should like to ask you
That's if you're married first, ask me to your wedding
And if I am before you then I'll do the same"

So the bargain was made when up stepped a young ?jade?
He stepped up to her, he intended to have her
He was a ship's carpenter's son by his trade.

So she wrote John a letter, a kind loving letter,
To come to her wedding on the ninth day of June
To wait on her table instead of her bedder
To wait on her table all on the bridegroom

When this letter he read it made his heart bleed
In sorrow he mourned, his tale was soon turned
"I'm a fool, I'm undone, I have lost her indeed"

So he saddled his horse, rode off to the station
Thinking to meet with his true lover there
But when he got there he was sadly amazed
To see this young girl so highly surmounted
Which caused from his eye to fall many a tear.

"If I had known, you'd be had so soon
I would not have tarried but you I'd have married

So jump up beside me and leave him alone"
"Oh no, my dear John, for I've much better choosed
And can't you remember what you said to me:

When a man he gets wed
His joys are all fled
He's free from all liberty
Bound down towards slavery
So whilst you were single
You'd wish me good night"

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recorded by Linda Adams on "Voices. English Traditional Songs" (1992)

"Despite being printed in various broadsides and chap books in the early nineteenth century it has been rarely collected in the tradition. Alfred Williams collected it prior to the Great War at Brize Norton, the Hammond brothers collected a Dorset version called Down in the West Country in 1907, John Baldwin collected one in Oxfordshire in 1969 and in the Southern Uplands of the U.S.A. it has been found as "No Sign Of Marriage". Linda's version comes from the singing of Freda Palmer of Witney, Oxfordshire. Again, the twist in the tale is that having made the wrong decision our hero has to live with it. Full marks to the young lady in question." - Paul Adams

The tune is a bit complicated, because there are verses with 3,4,5 and 6 lines, each sung to a slightly different tune. MJ

MJ

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