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Rosemary Lane

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When I was in service in the Rosemary Lane,
I won the good will of my master and dame.
Till a sailor came there one night to lay;
That was the beginning of my misery.

He called for a candle to light him to bed;
And likewise a silk kerchief for to tie up his head.
To tie up his head as the sailors will do,
And he said, "My pretty Polly, will you come too?"

This maid, young and foolish, she thought it no harm
To lie into bed for to keep herself warm.
What happened that night I may never disclose,
But I wish that short night had been seven long years.

Oh, on the next morning he so early arose
And into my apron three guineas did throw.
Saying, "This will I give, and much more will I do
If you'll be my Polly wherever I go.

"And if it's a boy, he will fight for the king;
If it be a girl, she will wear a gold ring.
She will wear a gold ring and a dress all of flame
To remind you of your time in the Rosemary Lane."

Repeat first verse....

Laws K43

Recorded by Scartaglen on "Last Night's Fun." One of a very large family of songs such as "Raspberry Lane"; "Home, Dearie, Home"; and others (in this collection see "The Servant of Rosemary Land," "Raspberry Lane," "Ambletown"). The version given here is relatively unusual in that it is downbeat and has a minor tune. It may also be significant that the girl works on Rosemary Lane; in Elizabethan symbolism, rosemary is the herb for remembrance. The song should not be confused with "Strawberry Lane" (printed, e.g., in Alan Lomax's "The Folk Songs of North America"), or "Petticoat Lane" (in Cazden, Haufrecht, and Studer's "Folk Songs of the Catskills"), which are versions of Child 2, "The Elfin Knight."

RW

It survives in the oral tradition (in the US at least) as Bell

Bottom Trousers. RG

RW