

Unknown Artist, A Prisoner For Life

A Prisoner For Life

My old father advised me when I was but young,
"Of ramblin' an' gamblin', bad company shun.
These words you'll remember when I'm old an' gray,
These words you'll remember when I'm cold in my grave."
But I kept on a-ramblin' in that terrible band,
Till I was attacked by the laws of the land,
Was tried an' convicted for mail robbery,
Nine years was transported across the salt sea.
Then I met my old father a-leavin' the dock,
He wrang his poor hands an' he tore his gray locks ,
Sayin', "Son, they have ruint you, I've advised you before,
But now we are partin' to meet here no more."
If I was on shipboard, pretty Molly by me,
Bound down in strong Ireland I'd feel myself free,
Bound down in strong Ireland an' kept like a slave,
'Twas in my own country I did not behave.
Farewell, little doogie, to an embel you fly,
You sing an' you sorrow your troubles all by;
Oh, what would I give in such freedom to share,
To roam at my ease an' to breathe the fresh air.
Oh, farewell, kind comrades, I'm willin' to own
That such a wild outcast has never been known;
'Tis the cause of my ruin an' sudden downfall,
An' caused me to labor behind the stone wall.

Note: One of many local variants, each, apparently with an
"authentic" local history. In next to last verse, I find myself
utterly charmed by "..little doogie, to an embel you'll fly.."
Any Missourians have a clue?

From Ozark Folksongs, Randolph. Collected from Carrie Baber, MO,
1922

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