



Maybe your friends think I'm just a stranger
My face you'll never see no more
But there is one promise that is given
I'll meet you on God's golden shore

It's fare you well to a native country
The places I have loved so well
For I have seen all kinds of trouble
In this cruel world, no tongue can tell

In 2009, on the Diane Rehm Show, Ralph Stanley of the Stanley Brothers, whose autobiography is titled Man of Constant Sorrow, discussed the song, its origin, and his effort to revive it:

"Man of Constant Sorrow" is probably two or three hundred years old. But the first time I heard it when I was a'know, like a small boy, my daddy – my father – he had some of the words to it, and I heard him sing it, and we – my brother and me – we put a few more words to it, and brought it back in existence. I guess if it hadn't been for that it'd have been gone forever. I'm proud to be the one that brought that song back, because I think it's wonderful.

Ralph Stanley was a prolific Virginian bluegrass artist.



Dick Burnett (1883 – 1977) was an American folk musician and songwriter from Kentucky.



Burnett was born near Monticello, Kentucky. Blind for most of his life, he was a full-time traveling entertainer.

Burnett has been described as "one of the great natural songsters, a man who collected, codified, and transmitted some of our best traditional songs. Dick was also a skilful composer and folk poet of considerable skill; his "Man of Constant Sorrow" remains one of the most evocative country songs."



It's fare thee well my own true lover
I never expect to see you again
For I'm bound to ride that northern railroad
Perhaps I'll die upon this train

You can bury me in some deep valley
For many years where I may lay
Then you may learn to love another
While I am sleeping in my grave

For six long years I've been in trouble
No pleasure here on earth I find
For in this world I'm bound to ramble
I have no friends to help me now

The state where I was borned and raised

I am a man of constant sorrow
I've seen trouble all my days
I bid farewell to old Kentucky

Perhaps, dear friends, you are wonderin'
What the miners eat and wear.
This question I will try to answer,
For I'm sure that it is fair.

For breakfast we had bulldog gray,
For supper we had beans and bread.
The miners don't have any dinner,
And a tick of straw they call a bed.

Well, we call this hell on earth, friends,
I must tell you all goodbye.
Oh, I know you all are hungry,
Oh, my darlin' friends, don't cry.

The song has been covered and changed many times over the years, notably Sarah Ogan Gunning's version in 1936 "Girl of Constant Sorrow".

My mother, how I hated to leave her,
Mother dear who now is dead.
But I had to go and leave her
So my children could have bread.

References:

https://people.bu.edu/zakbos/songs/song_sorrow.html

Lyrics and short history of the song
<http://bluegrassmessengers.com/girl-of-constant-sorrow--sara-ogan-gunning.aspx>

Sarah Ogan Gunning's version.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Man_of_Constant_Sorrow

More history of the song

Song Suggestions

- Oh, Death
- Ragged but Right
- Willie Moore
- Lil Omie Wise
- Shady Grove



Zines about Kentucky Folk songs

Man of Constant Sorrow



The original song contains the lyrics
*Oh, six long year I've been blind, friends,
My pleasures here on earth are done,
In this world I have to ramble,
For I have no parents to help me now.*

It's familiar to most because of the 2000 Movie "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" in which the titular "Soggy Bottom Boys" sing the song as a disguise, being runaway prisoners.

