

## The Tolliver Song [63]

[~~Law E-20~~]

This song is closely related to one of the most famous of Kentucky feuds, the Rowan County "War." It should be pointed out that the code of honor of the Highlander does not require that he give his opponent a fair chance to defend himself; any means, fair or foul, are suitable, and his behavior is in striking contrast to the chivalric spirit of the plainsman of the West. In Kentucky this ballad is known as "The Rowan County War." ~~Contributed by Hattie Roan, Cliff~~

~~The Rowan County War~~

It was in the month of August, all on election day,  
Lent Martin, he was wounded, some say by Johnny Day.  
But Martin could not believe it, or could not think it so;  
He thought it was Bud Tolliver that struck the fatal blow.

They wounded young Ad Simon, although his life was saved;  
He seems to shun grog shops since he stood near the grave.  
They shot and killed Sol Bradley, a sober, innocent man;  
Left his wife and children to do the best they can.

Martin did recover, some months had come and past;  
All in the town of Morehead these men did meet at last.  
Tolliver and a friend or two about the street did walk;  
They seemed to be uneasy, with no one wished to talk.

They walked into Judge Carey's grocery<sup>1</sup> and stepped up to  
the bar;  
But little did he think, dear friends, he had met his fatal hour.  
The sting of death was near him; Martin rushed in at the  
door.

A few words passed between them concerning a row before.

People soon got frightened, began to rush out of the room,  
When a ball from Martin's pistol laid Tolliver in the tomb.  
His friends then gathered round him, his wife to weep and  
wail;

And Martin was arrested and placed in the county jail.

He was put in jail at Roand,<sup>2</sup> there to remain a while,

<sup>1</sup> Grocery—saloon.

<sup>2</sup> [Roand—Rowan.]

In the hands of law and justice, to bravely stand his trial.  
The people talked of lynching him, at present though they  
failed;

The prisoner's friends removed him to Winchester jail.

Some persons forged an order, their names I do not know;  
The plan was soon agreed upon, for Martin they did go.  
Martin seemed to be discouraged, he seemed to be in dread.  
"They have sought a plan to kill me," to the jailer Martin  
said.

They put the handcuffs on him, his heart was in distress.  
They hurried to the station, got on the night express.  
Along the line she lumbered, just at her usual speed.  
There were only two in numbers to commit the awful deed.

Martin was in the smoking car, accompanied by his wife.  
They did not want her present when they took her husband's  
life.

And when they arrived at Farmer, they had no time to lose.  
A band approached the engineer and bade him not to move.

They stepped up to the prisoner with pistols in their hands;  
In death he soon was sinking, he died in iron bands.

His wife overheard the noise, being in the smoking car.  
She cried, "O Lord! they've killed my husband," when she  
heard the pistols fire.

The death of these two men has caused trouble in our land,  
Caused men to leave their families and take the parting band.  
It has caused continual war, which may never, never cease.  
I would to God that I could see our land once more in peace.

They killed our deputy sheriff, Baumgartner was his name.  
They shot him from the bushes, after taking deliberate aim.  
The death of him was dreadful, it may never be forgot:  
His body was pierced and torn with thirty-two buckshot.

I composed this song as a warning. Oh, beware young men!  
Your pistols will cause you trouble, on this you may depend.  
In the bottom of a whiskey glass a lurking devil dwells,  
Burns the breath of those who drink it, and sends their souls  
to hell.

If th  
poser,  
of Hig  
Co., V