

## FRANKIE AND ALBERT

A Frankie song is like a grand opera rôle; interpretations vary. The Leighton brothers run a gamut of emotions; John Lomax delivers a quizzically mournful monotone; Sig Spaeth vocalizes it like a gnome riding a gnu with gnats mellifluously. The maxim, "Life is a tragedy to those who feel, a comedy to those who think," may go for viewpoints on this ballad. It is stark and fierce, it is serio-comic, or it is blah-blah — as you like it.

If America has a classical gutter song, it is the one that tells of Frankie and her man. Josie, Sadie, Lillie, Annie, are a few of her aliases; she has many. Prof. H. M. Belden of the University of Missouri showed me sixteen Frankie songs, all having the same story though a few are located in the back country and in bayous instead of the big city. Then I met up with R. W. Gordon; he has 110 Frankie songs, and is still picking up new ones. R. Emmett Kennedy in his remarkably thorough and valuable book, "Mellows" has a song, "My Baby in a Guinea Blue Gown," which belongs in the Frankie discussion because its tune may have been the grandfather of the most widely known Frankie melodies. The Frankie and Albert song, as partly given here, was common along the Mississippi river and among railroad men of the middle west as early as 1888. It is a simple and mournful air, of the short and simple annals of the poor. The Frankie and Johnny song is of later development, with notes of violence and flashes of exasperation. The Frankie Blues came still later, and with its "blue" notes is, of course, "meaner" as a song. In many colleges are groups who sing Frankie songs in ragtime manner, with lackadaisical verses. As our American culture advances, it may be that classes will take up the Frankie songs as seriously as a play by Molière or a Restoration comedy or the Provençal ballads of France. It may be said that the Frankie songs, at best, are an American parallel of certain European ballads of low life, that are rendered by important musical artists from the Continent for enthusiastic audiences in Carnegie Hall, New York, or Orchestra Hall, Chicago. Some day, perhaps, we may arrive at a better common understanding of our own art resources and how to use them. While the Frankie story deals with crime, violence, murder, adultery, its percentage in these respects is a good deal less than in the average grand opera.

Lastly, for those about to sing this piece, we should note that in several places, in San Francisco, Omaha, Fort Worth, Fort Smith, Fort Scott and Dubuque the verse about the man under the doctor's care crying, "Roll me over easy," or "Turn me over, doctor," has no tune; all present joining in a wide, wild, disconnected wailing. Also, we note, by alternating the names of Albert and Johnny, or Frankie, Josie, Sadie, any verse of any song goes for all. The air of version II of Frankie and Johnny, carries all the verses of version I, except that the repeat, "so wrong" isn't used. While it may seem a discrepancy that Frankie, threatened with the electric chair, ends her days on the gallows, it should also be understood that several versions of the song picture her starting to join a county chain gang, wearing a ball and chain attached to one of her ankles.

FRANKIE AND ALBERT

Arr. E. C.

Frankie and Albert were sweethearts, ev'ry - bod-y

knows, Frank-ie spent a hun-dred dol - lars just to get her man some

clothes; He was her man, . . . . . but he done her wrong. . . . .

*p* *mf* *p* *poco marcato* *p*

1 Frankie and Albert were sweethearts, everybody knows,  
 Frankie spent a hundred dollars just to get her man some clothes;  
 He was her man, but he done her wrong.

2 Frankie went down to the corner, took along a can,  
 Says to the lovin' bartender, "Has you seen my lovin' man?  
 He is my man, but he's doin' me wrong."

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- 3 "Well, I ain't gonna tell you no story, ain't gonna tell you no lie,  
Albert went by 'bout an hour ago, with a girl called Alice Fry;  
He was your man, but he's doin' you wrong."
- 4 Frankie's gone from the corner, Frankie ain't gone for fun,  
Underneath her apron she's got Albert's gatlin' gun;  
He was her man, but he done her wrong.
- 5 Albert sees Frankie comin', out the back door he did scoot,  
Frankie pulled out the pistol, went roota-de-toot-toot-toot.  
He was her man, but she shot him down.
- 6 Frankie shot him once, Frankie shot him twice,  
Third time that she shot him the bullet took his life;  
He was her man, but he done her wrong.
- 7 When Frankie shot Albert, he fell down on his knees,  
Looked up at her and said, "Oh, Frankie, please,  
Don't shoot me no mo', don't shoot me no mo'."
- 8 "Oh, turn me over, doctor; turn me over slow,  
Turn me over on my right side, 'cause the bullet am hurtin' me so  
I was her man, but I done her wrong."
- 9 Now it's rubber-tired carriages, decorated hack,  
Eleven men went to the graveyard, and only ten come back:  
He was her man, but he's dead and gone.
- 10 Frankie was a-standin' on the corner, watchin' de hearse go by,  
Threwed her arms into the air, "Oh, let me lie  
By the side of my man, what done me wrong."
- 11 Frankie went to the graveyard, bowed down on her knees,  
"Speak one word to me, Albert, an' give my heart some ease.  
You was my man, but I done you wrong."
- 12 Sheriff arrested Frankie, took her to the county jail,  
Locked her up in a dungeon cell, and throwed the keys away.  
She shot her man, said he done her wrong.
- 13 Judge tried lil' Frankie, under an electric fan;  
Judge says, "Yo' free woman now, go kill yourself anothah man.  
He was yo' man, now he's dead an' gone."

1

# FRANKIE AND JOHNNY

Arr. E. C.

*p* *s* *s* *s* *s*

Frank-ie and John-ny were lov - ers, . O lord - y how they could love.

*p*

*cresc.* *f*

Swore to be true to each oth - er, . true as the stars a -

*cresc.* *f*

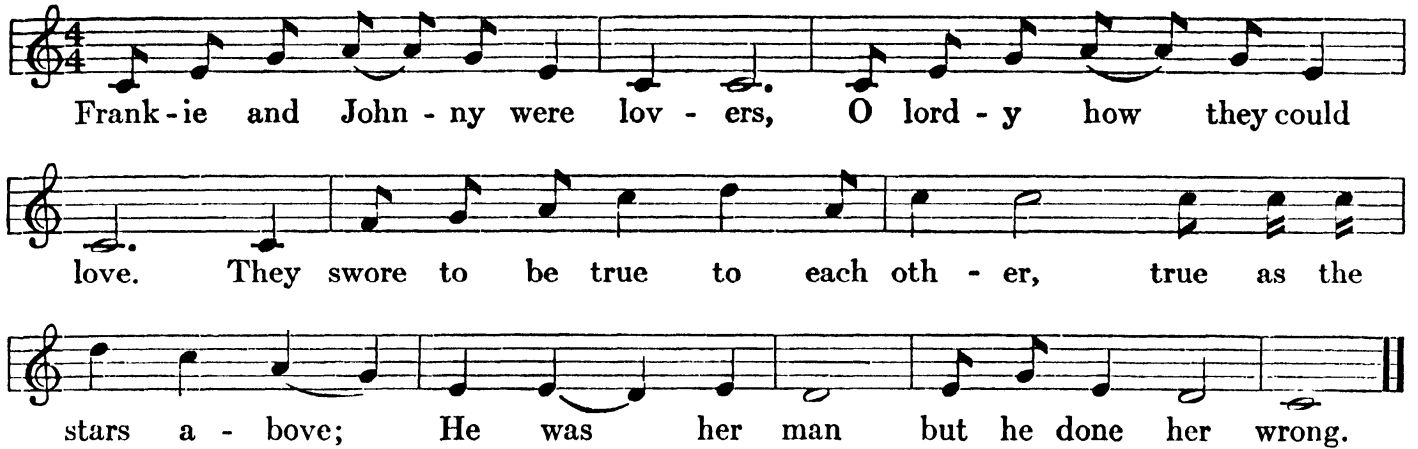
*p*

bove; He was her man but he done her wrong, so wrong.

*p*

## II

### FRANKIE AND JOHNNY



Frank - ie and John - ny were lov - ers, O lord - y how they could  
love. They swore to be true to each oth - er, true as the  
stars a - bove; He was her man but he done her wrong.

- 1 Frankie and Johnny were lovers, O lordy how they could love.  
Swore to be true to each other, true as the stars above;  
He was her man but he done her wrong, so wrong.
- 2 Johnny's mother told him, and she was mighty wise,  
Don't spend Frankie's money on that parlor Ann Eliz;  
You're Frankie's man, and you're doin' her wrong, so wrong.
- 3 Frankie and Johnny went walking, Johnny in his bran' new suit,  
"O good Lawd," says Frankie, "Don't my Johnny look cute?"  
He was her man but he done her wrong, so wrong.
- 4 Frankie went down to the corner, to buy a glass of beer;  
She says to the fat bartender, "Has my lovinest man been here?"  
He was my man but he's done me wrong, so wrong."
- 5 Frankie went down to the pawn shop, she bought herself a little forty-four  
She aimed it at the ceiling, shot a big hole in the floor;  
"Where is my man, he's doin' me wrong, so wrong?"
- 6 Frankie went back to the hotel, she didn't go there for fun,  
'Cause under her long red kimono she toted a forty-four gun.  
He was her man but he done her wrong, so wrong.
- 7 Frankie went down to the hotel, looked in the window so high,  
There she saw her lovin' Johnny a-lovin' up Alice Bly;  
He was her man but he done her wrong, so wrong.
- 8 Frankie went down to the hotel, she rang that hotel bell,  
"Stand back all of you floozies or I'll blow you all to hell,  
I want my man, he's doin' me wrong, so wrong."

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- 9 Frankie threw back her kimono, she took out her forty-four.  
Root-a-toot-toot, three times she shot, right through that hardwood floor,  
She shot her man, 'cause he done her wrong, so wrong.
- 10 Johnny grabbed off his Stetson, "O good Lawd, Frankie, don't shoot."  
But Frankie put her finger on the trigger, and the gun went roota-toot-toot,  
He was her man but she shot him down.
- 11 Johnny saw Frankie a comin', down the backstairs he did scoot;  
Frankie had the little gun out, let him have it rooty-de-toot;  
For he was her man, but she shot him down.
- 12 Johnny he mounted the staircase, cried, "O Frankie don't shoot!"  
Three times she pulled the forty-four gun a rooty-toot-toot-toot-toot,  
She nailed the man what threw her down.
- 13 "Roll me over easy, roll me over slow,  
Roll me over easy, boys, 'cause my wounds they hurt me so,  
But I was her man, and I done her wrong, so wrong."
- 14 "Oh my baby, kiss me once before I go.  
Turn me over on my right side, doctor, where de bullet hurt me so.  
I was her man but I done her wrong, so wrong."
- 15 Johnny he was a gambler, he gambled for the gain.  
The very last words he ever said were, "High-low Jack and the game."  
He was her man but he done her wrong, so wrong.
- 16 Bring out your long black coffin, bring out your funeral clo'es;  
Bring back Johnny's mother; to the churchyard Johnny goes.  
He was her man but he done her wrong, so wrong.
- 17 Frankie went to his coffin, she looked down on his face.  
She said, "O Lawd, have mercy on me, I wish I could take his place,  
He was my man, and I done him wrong, so wrong."
- 18 Oh bring on your rubber-tired hearses, bring on your rubber-tired hacks,  
They're takin' Johnny to the buryin' groun' an' they won't bring a bit of him back;  
He was her man but he done her wrong, so wrong.
- 19 Frankie stood on the corner to watch the funeral go by;  
"Bring back my poor dead Johnny to me," to the undertaker she did say,  
"He was my man, but he done me wrong, so wrong."
- 20 Frankie heard a rumbling away down in the ground,  
Maybe it was little Johnny where she had shot him down.  
He was her man and she done him wrong, so wrong.

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- 21 Frankie went to Mrs. Halcomb, she fell down on her knees,  
She said, "Mrs. Halcomb, forgive me, forgive me, if you please,  
For I've killed my man what done me wrong, so wrong."
- 22 "Forgive you, Frankie darling, forgive you I never can.  
Forgive you, Frankie darling, for killing your only man,  
Oh he was your man tho' he done you wrong, so wrong."
- 23 Frankie said to the warden, "What are they goin' to do?"  
The warden he said to Frankie, "It's the electric chair for you,  
You shot your man tho' he done you wrong, so wrong."
- 24 The sheriff came around in the morning, said it was all for the best,  
He said her lover Johnny was nothin' but a doggone pest.  
He was her man but he done her wrong, so wrong.
- 25 The judge said to the jury, "It's as plain as plain can be;  
This woman shot her lover, it's murder in the second degree,  
He was her man tho' he done her wrong, so wrong."
- 26 Now it was not murder in the second degree, and was not murder in the third,  
The woman simply dropped her man, like a hunter drops a bird.  
He was her man but he done her wrong, so wrong.
- 27 "Oh bring a thousand policemen, bring 'em around today,  
Oh lock me in that dungeon, and throw the keys away,  
I shot my man, 'cause he done me wrong, so wrong."
- 28 "Yes, put me in that dungeon, oh put me in that cell,  
Put me where the northeast wind blows from the southeast corner of hell.  
I shot my man, 'cause he done me wrong, so wrong."
- 29 Frankie mounted to the scaffold as calm as a girl can be,  
And turning her eyes to heaven, she said, "Good Lord, I am coming to Thee.  
He was my man, but he done me wrong, so wrong."

