Convict Maid

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Ye London maids attend to me
While I relate my misery
Through London streets I oft have strayed
But now I am a Convict Maid

In innocence I once did live
In all the joy that peace could give
But sin my youthful heart betrayed
And now I am a Convict Maid

To wed my lover I did try
To take my master's property
So all my guilt was soon displayed
And I became a Convict Maid

Then I was soon to prison sent
To wait in fear my punishment
When at the bar I stood dismayed
Since doomed to be a Convict Maid

At lenth the Judge did me address
Which filled with pain my aching breast
To Botany Bay you will be conveyed
For seven years a Convict Maid

For seven long years oh how I sighed
While my poor mother loudly cried
My lover wept and thus he said
May God be with my Convict Maid

To you that here my mournful tale
I cannot half my grief reveal
No sorrow yet has been portrayed
Like that of the poor Convict Maid

Far from my friends and home so dear
My punishment is most severe
My woe is great and I'm afraid
That I shall die a Convict Maid

I toil each day in greaf and pain

And sleepless through the night remain
My constant toils are unrepaid
And wretched is the Convict Maid

Oh could I but once more be free
I'd never again a captive be
But I would seek some honest trade
And never become a Convict Maid

From Butterss & Webby Penguin Book of Australian Ballads where the song is called 'The London Convict Maid' with the note:
"From a broadside in the Mitchell Library. Printed by Birt, 39 Great St. Andrew Street, Seven Dials".
This tune is a variant of the Irish song from 1788 rebellion, 'The Croppy Boy', a tune also used for the British ballad 'McCaffery'.

Nearly 25,000 women were transported to Australia as convicts, half of them from Ireland. Convicts themselves were often defiant rather than repentent, as in the case of the Irish woman who on being sentenced in a Belfast court to a further term of transportation shouted "Hurrah for Sydney and the sky above her!"
MG
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