The Express Office (He is Coming to Us Dead)

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The office just had opened
When an old man worned in years,
There entered, on his care-worn face
Was signs of grief and tears;
An' as the clerk approached him
With a tremblin' voice did say,
"I'm lookin' for my boy, sir.
He's comin' home today."

You've made a slight mistake, sir,
An' surely you must know
This is an express office, sir,
An' not the town depot.
An' if your boy is coming home
The clerk with smiles did say,
You'll find him with the passengers
At the depot over the way.

You do not understand me,
An' the old man shook his head,
He's not coming with the passengers
But by express instead.
He's comin' home to mother,
In a trembling voice he said,
He's comin' home in a casket, sir,
He's comin' to us dead.

Just then a whistle pierced the air,
The express train, some one cried,
The old man rose in breathless haste
An' quickly passed outside.
An' from the coach a long white box
Was lowered to the ground,
The scene was most heart-renderin'
To those that stood around.

Don't handle that box rough, boys,
For it contains our darlin' Jack,
He went away as you are now,
See how he's comin' back.
He broke his poor old mother's heart,

Her warnin' has come true,
She said he'd come back to us dead,
When he j'ined the boys in blue.

From Ozark Folksongs, Randolph.
Collected from Tandy Collins, MO, 1927

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