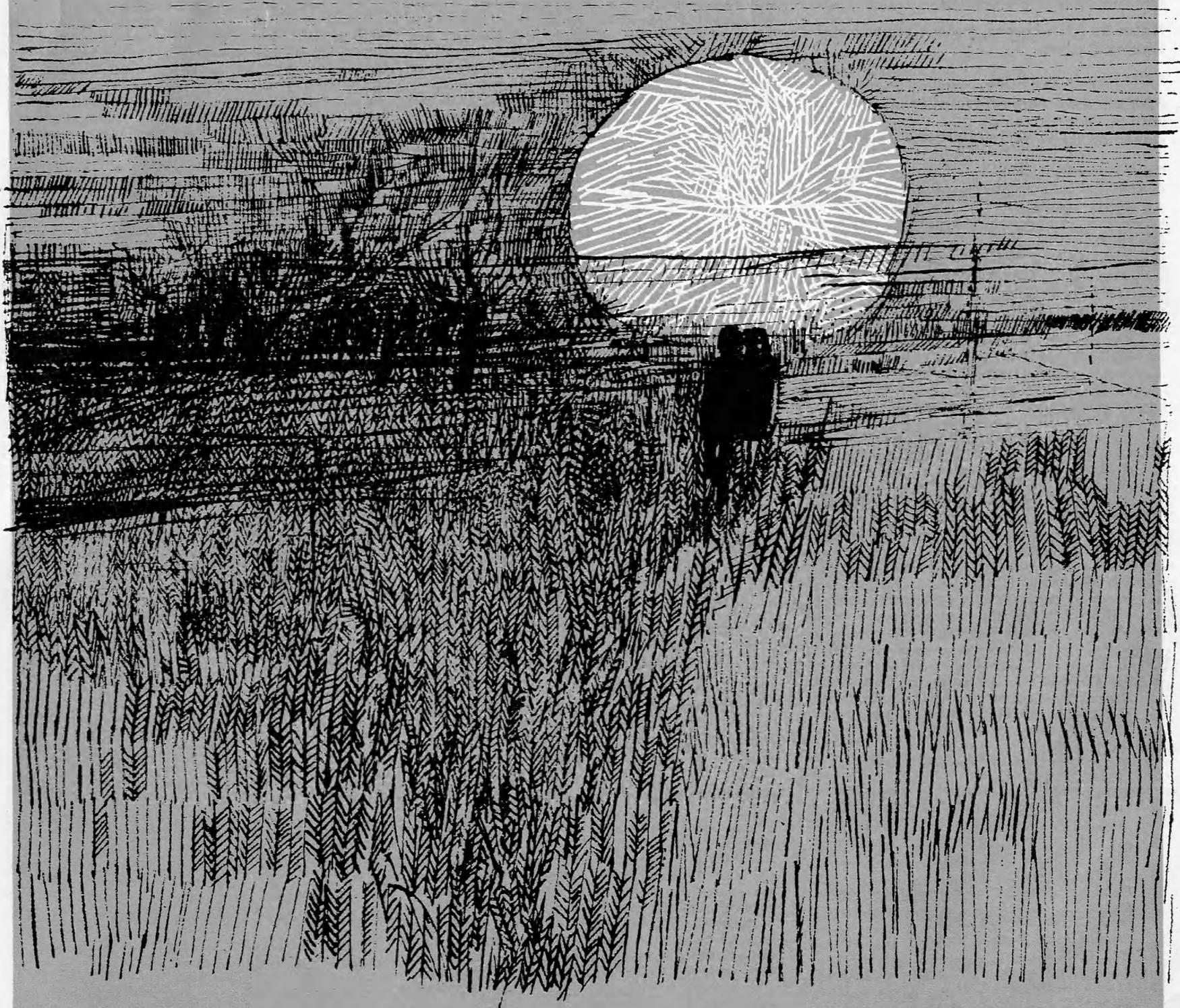


THE FOLK SONGS OF GREAT BRITAIN VOLUME 1

# SONGS OF COURTSHIP



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12T 157

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## INTRODUCTION

Green grow the laurels and soft falls the dew . . .

Sorry was I when I parted from you . . .

These lines capture the tone and the spirit of the love songs of the British Isles. The usual mood of these songs is neither merry nor tragic, but rather gravely joyful, gently sad and almost always tender, naively loving and sweet. Here, as a body of lyric song, they differ from the love songs of America, of France, of Italy.

It seems quite likely that the source of this special quality is to be found, ultimately, in the Celtic folk poetry of the British Isles. The lyric form probably entered Great Britain via Ireland, which had a high culture in the early Middle Ages and whose religious and cultural missionaries brought Christianity and the fine arts to much of Europe.

The singers here are all country people, many of them belonging to the 'tinker' clans which still live and sing in the open air during part of the year. They sing in their traditional country ways, conforming to vocal styles which in many cases pre-date concert singing and are far more appropriate to their material. Their art, for they have an art, is to mould the words and the tune together into a whole, introducing subtle variations into the melody and shading their intonation as the song runs on. On first hearing, perhaps, the listener unacquainted with authentic folk singing will be astonished or even repelled. But with more listening the strength, the delicacy and the truth of the folk singer's art enthalls one more and more.

These singers know little and care less about where their songs come from. For them it is good enough that the song seems fine and true and that their parents sang it. And the truth is that folklorists can say little more about specific origins in the case of these songs. Some lyric songs seem to be worn-down fragments of older ballads. Others are translations from Gaelic. Many are derived from eighteenth and nineteenth century broad-side poetry, which has passed into the popular tradition and been simplified and purified by oral transmission. One can say no more for certain, however, than that these songs belong to a very old folk tradition that has flowed on for centuries beside the mainstream of British fine art poetry, but very little affected by it. Folk and written verse share the same delight in nature, in tender and romantic love, in candour and simplicity, but otherwise the folk have gone their own way. This record gives a sampling of the survival of the folk lyric among the country singers of England, Scotland and Ireland.

*For reasons of space it has not been possible to reproduce all the stanzas of each song on the disc. However, all stanzas are given in the text of this booklet; those omitted from the recording appear in italics.*

## Volume 1 SIDE A

1 GREEN GROW THE LAURELS, *sung by Jeannie Robertson, Aberdeen; recorded by Peter Kennedy*

According to a charming old fancy, flowers speak the language of love. The red rose and the violet mean true love, the rue and the origane (marjoram) mean false; while the green of growing laurel stands for young love, fickle or constant. Probably all of these notions have been entertained by singers of *Green Grow the Laurels* in the course of its long travels through the British Isles and North America, for folk memory is like the laurel, fickle as well as constant. Most often, perhaps, the last line occurs as:

We'll change the green laurel for the orange and blue . . . Anne Gilchrist says that the colours had political significance in the rebellion of '98. 'Orange and blue' may then have represented the union of loyal Irish and English Protestants, while the green laurel tree was the symbol of Irish liberty.

Another authority points out that 'orange and blue' were the colours of a highly esteemed North of England regiment. When an Irish or Scots girl fell in love with a soldier wearing these colours, she would give up her green laurel (her political loyalty or her virtue) to wear his colours. Perhaps the most curious accident to befall this bitter-sweet song of parting occurred south of the Rio Grande River in Mexico. The invading American troops in the War of 1840 sang *Green Grow the Laurels* so incessantly that the Mexicans nicknamed them 'gringos'.

In Great Britain *Green Grow* has long been a campfire favourite of gypsies, tinkers and travelling folk, and thus it came into the hands of Jeannie Robertson, a traveller herself, and the descendant of a long line of ballad singers. Her song speaks for a young girl who has lost her lover, but still hopes to prove him faithful.

### References

In *Guide* under title THE ORANGE AND THE BLUE; *Gillington SOR* p. 8; *Kidson EPS* p. 60; *Ord* p. 182; *Sam Henry* Nos. 165, 479, 624; *FSJ* I, p. 246, V, p. 70; *Sharp A II*, p. 211; *Belden* p. 490; *Randolph I*, p. 272; *Lomax FSNA* p. 332.

- 1 I once had a sweetheart but now I've got none.  
He's gone and he's left me to weep and to mourn.  
He's gone and he's left me to weep and to mourn,  
And we'll change the green laurels to the violets so blue.
- 2 For he wrote me a letter all rosy and lined,  
But I wrote him another all twisted and twined,  
Saying: Keep your love letters and I will keep mine,  
For you write to your sweetheart and I'll write to mine.
- 3 He passes my window both early and late,  
And the looks that he gives me it makes my heart break,  
And the looks that he gives me it makes my heart break,  
So we'll change the green laurels to the violets so blue.
- 4 Green grow the laurels and sweet falls the dew,  
Sorry was I when I parted with you;  
But I hope the next meeting, I hope you'll prove true,  
And we'll change the green laurels to the violets so blue.

2 THE FALSE BRIDE, *sung by Bob Copper, Rottingdean, Sussex; recorded by Peter Kennedy.*

In Southern English songs, the drama of love is usually played out of doors, under a fine sky and in green meadows where lambs are skipping, or in the forest where the birds sing sweet. Indeed, many of these songs hark back to a time not long past, when the young people went into woods on May Eve to gather flowers and to look for love. The tunes seem to reflect the misty, green beauty of the hills of the South, where love is gently and naturally given and received and where silent and shy lovers, very like Thomas Hardy's Jude and Tess, were often left to weep.

### References

*Christie II*, p. 134; *Baring-Gould SW* p. 198; *Sharp FSS I*, p. 40; *Ord* p. 175; *O Lochlainn I*, p. 170; *Vaughan*

*Williams/Lloyd* p. 37; *Vaughan Williams YL* p. 4; *FSJ I*, p. 23, II, p. 12.

- 1 Now a week before Easter, the morn bright and clear  
The sun it shone brightly and keen blew the air;  
I went up in the forest to gather fine flowers,  
But the forest won't yield me no roses.
- 2 The roses are red, the leaves they are green,  
The bushes and briars are pleasant to be seen;  
Where the small birds are singing and changing their note,  
Down among the wild beasts in the forest.
- 3 Now the first time I saw my love, she was dressed all in white,  
Made my eyes run and water, quite dazzled my sight,  
When I thought to myself that I might have been that man,  
But she's left me and gone with some other.
- 4 Now the next time I saw my love, she was in the church stand,  
With a ring on her finger and a glove in her hand;  
So now she's gone from me and showed me false play,  
She's gone and got tied to some other.
- 5 So dig me a grave both long, wide and deep,  
And strew it all over with roses so sweet,  
That I might lay down there and take a long sleep,  
And that's the right way to forget her.

3 OUR WEDDING DAY, *sung (with uilleann pipes) by Francis McPeake, Belfast; recorded by Peter Kennedy*

Somewhat to the consternation of Irish folk song collectors, the McPeakes, father and son – the father an ex-farm labourer turned photographer and the son a garage mechanic – accompany their folk songs on bagpipes. Balkan shepherds have long made music in this way, but it is unprecedented in Ireland, where folk songs are unaccompanied and where the complex Irish parlor pipes are used to play tunes only. Despite their critics, however, the McPeakes stuck to their pipes, and they have won first prizes for folk singing at the International Eisteddfod in Wales.

The McPeakes sing in the harsh-voiced and highly decorated style common among the Irish patriots of Northern Ireland. *Our Wedding Day*, one of their finest songs, shows that on occasion a talented collector-arranger can make a contribution to folk tradition. Padraic Colum adapted the text from a ballad. Herbert Hughes set this text to an old air and published it in his *Irish Country Songs*. John McCormack and others recorded the Colum-Hughes piece and thus put the theme back into folk circulation. The poem hints at a story common to many Irish love songs – of a couple crossed in love by ambitious parents, and of a girl who dies and returns to her lover from the grave. Paddy Tunney's version comes to a more worldly conclusion:

According to promise at midnight he arose,  
But all that he found was the downfolded clothes.  
The sheets they lay empty, 'twas plain for to see,  
And out of the window with another went she.

### References

*Hughes I*, p. 46 under title SHE MOVED THROUGH THE FAIR. *Sam Henry* Nos. 24, 141, 534. The traditional matrix of the Hughes-Colum song can be found (as ONCE I HAD A TRUE LOVE) sung by Paddy Tunney on Topic 12T139.

- 1 My young love said to me, 'My parents won't mind.  
My father won't slight ye for your lack of kind.'  
She stepped away from me, and thus she did say:  
'It will not be long, love, till our weddin' day.'
- 2 She stepped away from me and she went through the fair,  
And fondly I watched her move here and move there;  
And then she went homeward with one star awake,  
As the swan in the evening moves over the lake.
- 3 I dreamt last night she came softly in,  
So softly she came, her feet made no din.  
She laid her hand on me and thus did she say:  
'It will not be long, love, till our wedding day.'

4 WHEN A MAN'S IN LOVE, *sung by Paddy Tunney, Beleck, Co. Fermanagh; recorded by Peter Kennedy*  
Paddy Tunney learned most of his songs from his mother, Brigid, who was a Gallagher from County Donegal. A folk song enthusiast, like all his family, Paddy has used the opportunities afforded by his job as travelling health inspector to collect songs and to learn the regional singing styles of Northern Ireland. Few people in Ireland today can equal him as a sensitive and faithfully traditional folk singer. This lusty and yet tender love ballad, which describes a country courtship, has been found several times in Ireland and once or twice in Nova Scotia.

*References*

O'Neill MI No. 164 (tune only); Sam Henry No. 211; Creighton/Senior p. 214.

- 1 When a man's in love he feels no cold  
Like me not long ago;  
Like a hero bold to see his girl  
He'll plough through frost and snow.  
The moon she gently shed her light  
Along my dreary way,  
Until I came to that sweet spot  
Where all my treasure lay.
- 2 I knocked at my love's window, saying,  
'My dear, are you within?'  
And softly she undid the latch,  
And slyly I slipped in.  
Her hand was soft, her breath was sweet,  
Her tongue did gently glide.  
I stole a kiss, it was no miss,  
And I asked her to be my bride.
- 3 'Take me to your chamber, love,  
O take me to your bed,  
Take me to your chamber, love,  
To rest my weary head.'  
'To take you to my chamber, love,  
My parents they won't agree,  
But sit you down by yon bright fire,  
And I'll sit close to thee.'
- 4 'Many a time I courted you,  
Against your father's will,  
You never said once you'd be my bride,  
But now, my dear, sit still,  
Tonight I'm going to cross the sea  
To far Columbia's shore,  
And you will never, never see  
Your youthful lover more.
- 5 'Many a cold and stormy night  
I came to visit you,  
When tossed about by cold winter winds,  
Or wet by the morning dew.  
Tonight our courtship's at an end  
Between my love and me;  
So fare you well, my favourite girl,  
A long farewell to thee.'
- 6 'Are you going to leave me now?  
O pray what can I do?  
I'd break through every bond of love  
To go along with you;  
Perhaps my parents may forget  
But surely they'll forgive,  
For from this hour I am resolved  
Along with you to live.
- 7 Then with a kiss the ring was closed  
And the wedding it's come on;  
From courtship cares they are released,  
These two are joined in one  
(Above first three lines repeated)  
They now are joined in one.

5 AILEIN DUINN (Brown-Haired Allan), *sung by Flora McNeill, Barra, Outer Hebrides; recorded by Alan Lomax*  
*Ailein Duinn* was probably once sung as a work song. Each verse consists of one new line for the leader and a refrain for the chorus of women, singing together as they walk a piece of tweed. It is an unrhymed lament, couched in epic language. In both form and style,

therefore, this song harks back to an archaic period before the lyric form penetrated the British Isles. And yet the mood of the piece, its exquisitely tender poetry and its melting tune, hold the spirit of British lyric song at its finest. Many songs of this type and of this high quality have been found in the Hebrides, where old Celtic folkways are perhaps better preserved than anywhere else.

Flora McNeill grew up on Barra, learning her songs and her style from her people and from other traditional singers on the island. Later she became the Barra telephone operator, and widely known for her fine traditional singing.

- 1 Ailein duinn a nis a naire  
No na hi o hoireann o ho,  
Hi na hi ri o ha o
  - 2 'S goirt 'daora phaign mi mal dhuit
  - 3 Cha chroah-laoigh s'cha chaoraich bhana
  - 4 Ach a luchd a dhoirt am bata
  - 5 Bha m'athair oire s'mo thacuir bhraithrean
- Translation by the singer, of the complete song**  
*My own brown-haired Alan,  
Sore and dear was the tax I paid.  
Not cattle or white sheep  
But the load the ship spilled.  
My father was on her and my three brothers  
And the child of my bosom which I reared,  
That was not the worst of my sorrows,  
But the man to whom I gave my hand,  
The MacLean of the white breast,  
Who took me from the church on a Tuesday.  
Little seagull, little seagull of the sea,  
Come over and tell me your tale.  
Where did you leave the fair men?  
I left them in the isles of the sea  
Back to back and they are without breathing.  
Oh, so sad am I  
That your bed is the seaweed,  
That the seals are keeping your wake,  
Your high candles are the stars,  
Your violin music the sound of the sea.*

6 BONNIE KATE, *played on the fiddle by Agnes Whyte, Ballinakill, Co. Galway; recorded by Alan Lomax and Seamus Ennis*  
This lilting air, celebrating the charms of some lovely girl of long ago, is among the tunes that traditional Irish fiddlers like the best. Here it is superbly performed by an inn-keeper's daughter, Agnes Whyte, whose country dance orchestra is highly regarded by the folk of the West of Ireland.

*Reference*

O'Neill DMI No. 545.

7 OLD GREY BEARD NEWLY SHAVEN, *sung by Jeannie Robertson, Aberdeen; recorded by Peter Kennedy*  
Jeannie Robertson's people are all Stewarts – descendants, they believe, of the Royal Stewarts who had to take to the roads in Jacobite times and win their bread as itinerant musicians. Certainly these Stewarts are a handsome, musical set of people. Jeannie's childhood was filled with music, as many of her relatives sang ballads and played the pipes, and today she is regarded by many connoisseurs as the finest traditional ballad singer in Great Britain.

Here she takes up, with evident relish, a favourite British-American folk theme – the satire on a scheming mother who tries to force a rich old man on her lively daughter. Jeannie's tune is similar to the one she uses for the *Gypsy Laddie* (The Child Ballads I, Side A, No. 1, in this set), but, given a different rhythmic attack, it seems quite fresh. Another song with the same theme, but in a bawdy vein, is her *Never Wed an Auld Man* (Songs of Seduction, Side B, No. 7 in this set).

*References*

In *Guide* under title THE OLD GREY MAN. Greig FSNE No. CXLIX; Williams p. 73; Vaughan Williams/Lloyd p. 76; Hammond/Gardiner p. 65; FSJ 1937, p. 130; Sharp A II, p. 93; Randolph I, p. 291.

- 1 A dotted auld carle came ower the lee;  
Ha ha but I would nae hae him;  
He come ower the lee and a' to court me,  
Wi' his grey beard newly shaven.
- 2 My mither tellt me tae open the door.  
I opened the door and he tottered in o'er.
- 3 My mither tellt me tae gie him a chair.  
I gied him a chair and he sit on the flair.
- 4 *My mither tellt me to gie him some meat.  
I gied him some meat but he'd nae teeth to eat.*
- 5 My mither tellt me to gie him a drink,  
I gied him a drink and he began to wink.
- 6 My mither tellt me to gie him a kiss,  
If you like him so well you can kiss him yourself'.

8 THE SWEET PRIMEROSSES, *sung by Bob and Ron Copper, Rottingdean, Sussex; recorded by Peter Kennedy*

The likelihood is that this song text comes straight off a printed broadside, for there is little variation among its eight or ten published texts. Furthermore, the proprieties are observed as they would have been by an urban poet. The frankness of the country singer is absent. Nevertheless *Sweet Primeroses* is a very pretty piece and much esteemed among country singers in the South of England. Bob and Ron Copper, who are cousins, come from a musical family already known and praised for its singing in the 1890's. A hundred years ago or more, many Southern English villages had such a group of gleemen, whose technique of singing in three or four parts, though print derived, had real folk touches. Bob and Ron Copper, (whose family songbooks contain scores of fine texts) once formed a quartet with their respective fathers.

*References*

In *Guide* under the title THE BANKS OF SWEET PRIMROSES. Barrett p. 80; Sharp FSS I, p. 8; Gil-lington HS p. 6; Carey p. 2; Kidson GEFS p. 56; Sharp IP p. 202; FSJ I, p. 21, IV, pp. 124-6.

- 1 As I walked out one midsummer's morning,  
For to view the fields and to take the air,  
Down by the banks of the sweet primeroses,  
There I beheld a most lovely fair.
- 2 Three long steps I stepped up to her,  
Not knowing her as she passed me by.  
I stepped up to her thinking for to view her,  
She appeared to me like some virtuous bride.
- 3 I said: 'Fair maid, where are you going?  
Or what's the occasion for all your grief?  
I will make you as happy as any lady  
If you will grant me once more relief.'
- 4 She said: 'Stand off, you are deceitful,  
You are deceitful and a false young man.  
It is you that's caused my poor heart for to wander,  
And to give me comfort lies all in vain.
- 5 I'll go down in some lonesome valley  
Where no man on earth shall e'er me find,  
Where the pretty little small birds do change their voices,  
And every moment blows blusterous winds.'
- 6 Come all young men that go a-courting,  
Pray, pay attention to what I say;  
There is many a dark and a cloudy morning  
Turns out to be a sunshiny day.

9 THE COOLIN, *played on the flute by Paddy Taylor, Foynes, Co. Limerick; recorded by Peter Kennedy*  
There are Gaelic and English words to this widely popular fiddle and pipe tune. In them a girl expresses her devotion to the *coolin*, the lad with the long golden locks hanging down to his shoulders, who is a symbol of revolutionary Ireland. A line in this song: 'Oh, have you seen the coolin?' means, 'Where do you stand politically?'

*References*

Petrie Nos. 598, 599, Joyce OIFMS p. 298.

10 SHULE AROON (Siúbhail a rúin), *sung by Elizabeth Cronin, Macroom, Co. Cork; recorded by Alan Lomax and Seamus Ennis*  
Some of the most touching songs in English are those

that have been translated from the Irish by unknown bilingual bards. Among the finest of these Anglo-Irish songs is *Shule Aroon*, the lament of a girl whose patriot lover fled Ireland in 1691 to serve the French king. She has dyed her petticoat red to show the world that her heart is engaged and loyal. The last line of every verse and refrain means: May you go safe, my love...

*Shule Aroon* has taken on an extraordinary variety of forms since it became widely popular in Great Britain and America. Sea shanties, lumberjack ballads, soldiers' songs, children's games, and all sorts of nonsense songs have been built out of this air and its haunting refrain. Perhaps the masterly performance of eighty-year-old Mrs. Elizabeth Cronin partly explains why. The melody is strange and sweet, and the refrain line runs so well to it that singers have apparently attempted to retain the Gaelic words even when they did not understand them.

#### References

In *Guide* under title SHULE AGRA. *Graves* p. 6; *Moffatt* p. 104; *Petrie* No. 1347; *Joyce OIFMS* p. 236; *Hannagan/Clandillon* No. 18; *Kidson EPS* p. 28; *FSJ* II, p. 253, III, pp. 26-31, V, pp. 180-1; *Sharp A* II, p. 50; *Belden* p. 281; *Randolph* III, p. 400.

- 1 I would I were on yonder hill,  
And there I'd sit and cry my fill,  
And every tear would turn a mill,  
Is go dtéidh tú mo mhúirnín slán.  
Siúbhail, siúbhail, siúbhail a rúin,  
Siúbhail go socair agus siubhail go ciuin,  
Siubhail go dorus agus éalaigh liúm,  
Is go dtéidh tú mo mhúirnín slán.
- 2 I'll sell my rock I'll sell my reel,  
I'll sell my only spinning wheel,  
To buy my love a coat of steel,  
Is go dtéidh tú mo mhúirnín slán.
- 3 I'll dye my petticoats, I'll dye them red,  
And round the world I'll beg for bread  
Until my parents shall wish me dead,  
Is go dtéidh tú mo mhúirnín slán.

#### 11 THE MOUNTAIN STREAMS, sung by Paddy Tunney, Beleek, Co. Fermanagh; recorded by Peter Kennedy

In contrast to the passionate directness and simplicity of *Shule Aroon* is the elaborate and charming blarney of this piece of Irish broadside verse. As usual, the poet and the maid meet in a beautiful natural setting; they exchange the most passionate vows; but nothing happens. The fact is, of course, that the song is a charming piece of fantasy from a culture where arranged marriages were the rule and young people had been taught to be careful in committing themselves in love. Paddy Tunney brings to this fine, old air all the stylistic graces he has acquired from his study of Irish folk singing.

#### Reference

*Sam Henry* No. 32.

- 1 With my dog and gun through the blooming heather,  
To seek for pastimes I took my way,  
Where I espied a lovely fair one;  
Her charms invited me a while to stay.  
I said: 'My darling, you will find I love you,  
Tell me your dwelling and your name also.'  
'Excuse my name and you'll find my dwelling near  
The mountain streams where the moorcocks crow.'
- 2 I said: 'My darling, If you'll wed a rover,  
My former raking I will leave aside.  
Here is my hand and I pledge my honour.  
If you prove constant I'll make you my bride.'  
'If my parents knew that I loved a rover  
Great affliction I would undergo.  
I'll stop at home for another season near  
The mountain streams where the moorcocks crow.'
- 3 'Then farewell, darling, for another season,  
I hope we'll meet in yon woodland vale;  
And when we meet we'll embrace each other,  
I'll pay attention to your lovesick tale.  
It's hand in hand we will join together,

*And I'll escort you to yon valleys low,  
Where the linnets sing her sweet notes so pleasing,  
The mountain streams where the moorcocks crow.'*

12 THE BROWN THORN, played on the uilleann pipes by Seamus Ennis, Dublin; recorded by Alan Lomax  
The glories of the ancient musical culture of Ireland are probably only hinted at in the pipe music that has survived, but even the pipers of the present age show a skill in playing and in melodic development that is unique in Western Europe. Seamus Ennis is a good Irish folk song collector, one of its great traditional singers and the finest living uilleann piper. He learned his art from his father and he once said that it takes fourteen years to make a piper – seven to learn how to handle the instrument and seven more to play it well. The uilleann pipes are a late eighteenth century development of the simpler war pipes. They require the piper to perform the following functions simultaneously: (1) work a small bellows with his left elbow; (2) keep the pressure on the airbag steady with his right elbow; (3) play the melody on the chanter with the fingers of both hands; (4) occasionally play chords on the regulator key of the drones; (5) raise and lower the end of the chanter off a leather pad strapped across the right knee; (6) occasionally retune one of the tuneable drones. Only the Sardinian triple reed-pipe is as difficult to play and produces as wild and beautiful a sound.

*The Brown Thorn* is an old pipe or fiddle tune with a story attached. A lord was preparing to marry a rich girl when his faithful brunette sweetheart came to the wedding feast, and made known her presence by dropping her engagement ring into her lover's wine glass. When he drained the wine, he recognised her and sent his rich fiancée back to her people, saying: 'The brown thorn bears by far the finest blossom'. The same air is used for a lyrical love-song likewise called *An draoighnean donn* (the brown thorn).

#### References

*Hardiman* I, p. 234; *Petrie* No. 451; *O'Neill MI* Nos. 31-33; *Costello* p. 72.

## Volume 1 SIDE B

#### 1 AS I ROVED OUT, sung by Seamus Ennis, Dublin; recorded by Alan Lomax

It seems likely that some British love songs are derived from ballads. This song seems certainly to have a direct connection with *The Trooper and the Maid* (Child No. 299, Vol. II, Side B, No. 12 in this set) and to be a half-way stage between the ballad and the lyric forms so common in Great Britain and in America where the story and the setting have virtually disappeared and only a few verses of flirtation remain.

This Irish form possibly took its rise when the Scots settlements were established in Northern Ireland. In addition, there are several independent British variants including the English army song, *The Light Dragoon* (Songs of Seduction, Side B, No. 2 in this set), the national song form, *Where Are You Going to, my Pretty Maid?*, and other forms that appear to be fragments or crosses of those mentioned (see references).

It is a testimony to the permissive, almost pagan spirit surviving in British folkways that this is probably the commonest and most popular folk song found in the British Isles today. One singer concluded his rendition with a couple of modern verses, having nothing to do with the story of the soldier and the lady, but everything to say about the intent of the song:

The tea it is a curious thing,  
It sets the girls all winking.  
The old devils they'll line up on their bed  
And on it they are thinking:  
A pint at night was my delight  
And a glass all in the morning.  
For the old devils they have my heart broke  
And the young ones – they're my darling.

#### References

In *Guide* under title SEVENTEEN COME SUNDAY. *Sharp SFS* II, p. 4; *Butterworth* p. 16; *Kidson GEFS* p. 2; *Sharp IP* p. 126; *Baring-Gould/Hammond/Gardiner* p. 238; *Vaughan Williams YL* p. 17; *FSJ* I, pp. 92-3, II, pp. 9-10, 268-70, IV, pp. 291-3, VI, p. 7.

- 1 As I roved out one bright May morning,  
One May morning early;  
As I roved out one bright May morning,  
One May morning early;  
I met a maid upon the way,  
She was her mama's darling.  
*Chorus*  
With me roo-rum-ra, fal-the-diddle-a  
Star-vee-upple-al the di-dee-o.
- 2 Her shoes were black and her stockings white,  
And her hair shines like the silver. } 2  
She has two nice, bright, sparkling eyes,  
And her hair hangs o'er her shoulder.
- 3 'What age are you, my pretty fair maid, } 2  
What age are you, my darling?'  
She answered me quite modestly:  
'I'm sixteen years next Monday morning.
- 4 (And) will you come to my mama's house? } 2  
The moon shines bright and clearly.'  
'Oh, open the door and let me in,  
And dad-da will not hear us.'
- 5 *She took me by the lily-white hand* } 2  
*And led me to the table.*  
*There's plenty of wine for soldiers here,*  
*As far as they can take it.*
- 6 *She took my horse by the bridle right* } 2  
*And brought him to the stable;*  
*There's plenty of hay for a soldier's horse*  
*As far as they are able.*
- 7 *And she went up and dressed the bed,* } 2  
*And dressed it soft and easy.*  
*And I went up to tuck her in*  
*Crying: 'Lassie, are you comfort-able?'*
- 8 *I slept in the house till the break of day,* } 2  
*And in the morning early,*  
*I got up and put on my shoes*  
*Crying: 'Lassie, I must leave you.'*

- 9 'And when will you return again  
Or when will we get married?' } 2  
'When cockle shells make silver bells  
That's the time we'll marry.'

2 THE MAGPIE'S NEST, *sung by Jane Kelly, Keady, Co. Armagh; recorded by Peter Kennedy and Sean O'Boyle*

'Aunt' Jane, a former weaver, now a housewife in her forties, learned her songs from her father, John Green, a quarryman and fiddler. She is a fine folk singer and as temperamental as an opera star. Before she made this recording, she stubbed out her cigarette on the floor, grasped the mike in both hands, 'keyed her whole self up' and launched forth. First she sang the tune in slow, free rhythm, but with each refrain she let loose a stream of dancing syllables in the style variously called diddling, liltling, courante or (in the Hebrides) mouth music – a trait of Celtic folk music wherever we find it.

In the fashion of so many Anglo-Irish songs, which may have their origin in an Irish text, the verses of this song make no particular sense, but are a delight to sing. There are bawdy variants (see *The Cuckoo's Nest, Songs of Seduction, Side B, No. 4* in this set) and the tune is played as a reel, a hornpipe and a country dance by pipers and fiddlers throughout the islands.

Reference  
*Hughes II, p. 26.*

- 1 For if I was a king, sure, I would make you a queen  
I would roll you in my arms where the meadows they are green.  
Yes, I'd roll you in my heart's content, I will sit me down to rest,  
'Longsides me Irish colleen in the magpie's nest.  
*Chorus*  
Skiddly-idle-dadle-diddle-didle-dadle-dum,  
Di-didle-dadle-dum, dadle-iddle-didle-dum,  
Skiddly-idle-dadle-diddle-dadle-diddle-didle-dum,  
I will lave ye down to rest in the magpie's nest.
- 2 For the magpie's nest it is a cottage neat and clean.  
It stands 'longside the Shannon where the meadows they are green.  
But I never met a colleen with such beauties blest,  
Like the little Irish fairy in the magpie's nest. (Cho.)
- 3 For I have wandered all through Kerry, I have wandered all through Clare.  
From Dublin down to Galway, from there to God knows where;  
But I never met a colleen with such beauties blest,  
Like the little Irish fairy in the magpie's nest. (Cho.)

3 DAME DURDEN, *sung by Bob and Ron Copper, Rottingdean, Sussex; recorded by Peter Kennedy*

Some time in the eighteenth century, singers and song-makers in Southern England went in for a period of what might be called national and patriotic pieces. Existing country songs were made over and new ones manufactured to confirm to an idealised image of rural English life. For the next two centuries, these somewhat self-conscious songs were smoothed down by the process of oral transmission. It is to this genre that *Dame Durden* belongs. It is robust and lusty, yet it keeps within the bounds of propriety. It has one unusual feature; the melody runs mainly in the major except for one rather surprising minor cadence, which keeps the song hovering between major and minor.

Reference  
*Williams, p. 129.*

- 1 Dame Durden kept five servant-maids to carry the milking pail;  
She also kept five labouring men to use the spade and flail.  
*Chorus*  
'Twas Moll and Bet and Doll and Kit and Dolly to drag her tail;  
It was Tom and Dick and Joe and Jack and Humphrey with his flail.  
Then Tom kissed Molly and Dick kissed Betty,

And Joe kissed Dolly and Jack kissed Kitty,  
And Humphrey with his flail,  
And Kitty she was a charming girl to carry the milking pail.

- 2 Dame Durden in the morn so soon she did begin to call.  
To rouse her servants, maids and men, she did begin to bawl. (Cho.)
- 3 'Twas on the morn of Valentine when birds begin to tweet,  
Dame Durden and her maids and men they all together meet. (Cho.)

4 CASADH AN tSUGAIN (Twisting the Hayrope), *sung in Gaelic by Maire O'Sullivan, Ballylickey, Co. Cork; recorded by Alan Lomax and Seamus Ennis*  
Maire O'Sullivan – a beautiful, blue-eyed, blonde young woman of great musical talent – learned her songs from the best traditional singers in Southern Cork. She did this because she loved the material and because she felt it was her patriotic duty to help keep alive the songs and the 'blas', or singing style of her county. She became one of the finest young folk singers in the West, with a gentle, brooding, exquisitely ornamental melodic line.

Here she performs a sort of satirical complaint which, in its super-abundance of words, its obliqueness, its confusion and its charm, is uniquely Irish. The man comes courting the woman of his heart. She asks him to show how well he can twist a hay-rope. He keeps adding hay and twisting away and backing up as he twists until he is outside the door and she slams it in his face. He hates her for tricking him. He protests he is a better man than most. He shudders to think he will have to marry a plain girl for her money. And he reflects bitterly on the woman he has lost. Such is the confusion that reigns in the heart of a man who has been jilted. The well-known *Rocks of Bawn* tune is constructed on the latter half of this melody. The song's story formed the subject of the first Gaelic play performed in Dublin, 'Casadh an tSugain' by Douglas Hyde.

References  
*Bunting G p. 51; Joyce OIFMS p. 400; Hannigan/Clandillon No. 32; JFS VI, p. 159; Texts only, in Hardiman, and Edward Walsh, Irish Popular Songs (Dublin, 1847).*

Translation

- 1 I played a trick in Mr. McDonald's house last night,  
The second trick in the public house by its side;  
The third trick – where is the use of my telling my story?  
But you would win a woman if you used good sincerity with her.
- 2 What sea-cat brought me here into this place,  
And I'd left so many nice girls behind me?  
I came into a house where lived the pride of my heart,  
And the hag put me out twisting a hay-rope.
- 3 I am drunk, and oh, what shame it is to me  
My friends and relations are forcing a wife on me without dowry,  
Because of a few worthless beasts, and a fairy of a woman without sense,  
And how often a man cut a stick that would beat himself.
- 4 If the cat had a dowry, wouldn't its mouth be nicely kissed?  
And the cat that wouldn't have would be chased far from home.  
The ugly hag's daughter is married since last night,  
And how many nice women there are without a man to kiss their mouth.
- 5 I would plough and harrow and sow seed in the ground;  
I would drive the calves on the banks where they would get best grass;  
I would put a shoe on the most beautiful steed, which would throw the finest jump,  
And a woman would elope with a man who could not even do that.

- 6 I would like a woman who would stay a year with her love.  
I would like a woman who would stay another year as she is.  
But I would not like a woman who would be with me, and with you again afterwards,  
But my love is the woman who stays always constant.
- 7 If you are with me, be with me, o joy of my heart.  
If you are with me, be with me before all the world.  
If you are with me, and that I own every inch of your heart,  
It is my heavy sorrow that you are not mine on Sunday.

4a THE GIRL WAS SMART FOR THE FIDDLER, *told and played by Michael Doherty (fiddle), Co. Donegal; recorded by Alan Lomax*

Michael Doherty, like all his forebears, tramps the hills of Northern Ireland with a pedlar's pack on his back, hawking goods to isolated cottages. When night overtakes him, his customers invite him to take a bite and spend the night. After supper, he tells stories and plays fiddle tunes to pay for his night's lodgings. One of the gentlest and most contented of men, he is also one of the great folk fiddlers. Here he tells a fiddler's version of *Twisting the Hayrope*, then he plays the tune.

Oh aye, that was a very true story. Well, he was a fiddle player and he was after coming from a dance, you see, and the poor fellow had a long way to go home. And it come on a very stormy night, and there was only the one house on this very lonesome road, and there was no one lived in this house, only two girls – by themselves. So he called in and sat down. He asked them could he get stopping to morning – that he was cold and that he was tired, and that he had a good bit to go and that he would like to have daylight with him in the morning, and that he'd have better courage and go.

'Well, no', says the girl, 'ye can't stop for there's no man about this house, only me and me sister, and ye can't stop. If there was a man about the house, of course you could stay right enough. It'd make no difference, but it wouldn't look nice for us two to keep a man here. What would people say the morrow?' 'Och, well,' he says, 'I don't care what the people says,' he says. 'I'll do ye no harm to the morning.'

So they seen then that they couldn't get him out, you know; they both studied on a plan. One of them went out and she got a bundle of hay – she got an arm of hay. And she says to him, 'Are you any good twisting them grass ropes?' she says. 'Did ever ye twist ropes?' she says to him. 'Oh, I did,' he says.

'Well, do you know,' she says, 'We have a lock of rope to twist. We have a fine cock of hay out there and I fear a big wind might toss it. I would like to get a lock of ropes made while you're here. Yes, I'll let them out and you can twist them, with a draw-hook.' So she reached him a draw-hook, and he had the fiddle at the same time hung to the bottom of his big coat, and he didn't hang up the fiddle at this time at all. So he caught the draw-hook and he joined to twist the ropes, and she says, 'Twist on, twist on now,' she says, 'Ye boyeen, till you get out to the street. I would like to make a good long one.'

So he twisted away and twisted away and twisted away and he backed out of the door backwards, and when she got him out she just closed the door. She give the door the quickest shut ever you seen, just when she got him out. So he was stuck then. So he caught his fiddle and he just played a tune. And you know the name he calls the tune? That 'The Girl Was Smart for the Fiddler!' I'll play it for you . . .

5 MY DARLING PLOUGHMAN BOY, *sung by Jimmy McBeath, Elgin, Moray; recorded by Alan Lomax and Hamish Henderson*

Until very recently most farm-workers earned low wages and were badly housed. In Scotland they dined on oatmeal and lived in crude dormitories called 'bothies', where one of their principal amusements was

This love ballad from the bothies tells a tale that would scandalise rural America, but seems perfectly natural in the North of Scotland. A ploughboy seduces his employer's daughter and gets her with child. The father is far from shocked; he simply refuses to let his daughter marry a man from another class. Old Bogie gets his deserts when his daughter runs away with a tinker.

Reference

Kerr I, p. 19.

- 1 *As I gaed doon to Huntley's toon ain morning for to fee,  
I met Bogheid o' Carnie, wi' him I did agree.*
- 2 *To work his twa best horses, cart or barrow or plow,  
Or anything about farm work I very weel could do.*
- 3 Auld Bogie had a daughter, her name was Isabelle,  
The lily of the valley and the primrose of the dell.
- 4 When she went a-walking, she choosed me for her guide,  
Doon by the burn o' Carnie to watch the fishes glide.
- 5 The first three months were scarcely o'er, the lassie lost her bloom,  
The red fell from her bonny cheeks and her eyes begin to swoon.
- 6 The neist nine months was passed and gone, she brought forth to me a son,  
And I was quickly sent for to see what could be done.
- 7 I said I should marry her, but oh, that wouldna dae,  
Said: You're nae match for my bonnie Belle and she's nae match for thee.
- 8 But noo she's married wi' a tinker lad, he comes frae Huntley toon,  
He mends pots and pans and paraffin lamps, and he scours the country roun'.
- 9 Maybe she's gotten a better match, auld Bogie canna tell,  
Fare-ye-weel, ye lads o' Huntley side, and Bogie's bonnie Belle.

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