TC 1145

THE FOLK SONGS OF BRITAIN

COLLECTED AND EDITED BY

PETER KENNEDY AND ALAN LOMAX

VOLUME IV

I

CAEDMON RECORDS, INC.
NEW YORK

Introduction – THE CHILD BALLADS, I

Since the time of Bishop Percy's *Reliques* and the romantic revival it helped to stimulate, the medieval ballad of Scotland and England has been the darling of the literary scholar. More attention has been devoted to the ballad than to all the rest of folklore put together, not because it was more important in the folk community than other forms, such as lyrics, tales and ceremonials, but because it corresponds more closely to the canons of fine-art literature. Controversy has raged round the difficult problems of ballad origins and diffusion for 200 years, yet most of the scholars involved seldom heard the ballad in context, sung by folk singers. It is our hope that this collection, taken from living tradition, performed entirely by folk singers, and presented in conjunction with the other categories of material to be found in Great Britain, will help to set these matters somewhat in perspective.

Professor F.J. Child, in his many-volumed work, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, assembled together the variants of all those pieces he deemed worthy of being called ballads. Although some modern scholars have recently caviled at his selection, no one has seriously challenged his scholarship. In sum, what Child shows us is that certain ballads are based on themes widespread in folklore; that others are sung in several European languages and thus must have been distributed from a single point at some time in the past; and that the ballad genre is one of the culture traits common to the whole of western Europe.

Recent research confirms Child's opinion that in many countries the ballad was danced and mimed as it was sung and that, as a type, it has been known in Europe since the beginning of the 12th century, if not before. Perhaps this latter statement will surprise some readers, who may regard the ballad as a very ancient type. Folk songs of a narrative cast are old and, indeed, can be found among primitive peoples in many parts of the world, but the ballad, with its lyrical, capsuling, narrative techniques, its special stanza form and its impersonal handling of a central incident in a story seems to be a fairly recent development.

A good deal of mystery surrounds the authorship of these remarkable sung-tales. The plain truth is that no one knows whether they were composed by minstrels, rhymed together by village poets out of a common stock of materials, or improvised verse after verse by various members of a dancing throng. I imagine that ballads originated in all of these ways (and in others of which we have no knowledge). A much more pertinent fact, however, is that the ballads, taken together with their tunes, cannot be separated from the whole corpus of European folklore, for they share with it a wide range of themes, emotional emphases, tunes, and literary devices. In a word, the origin of the ballad is part of the story of the rise of contemporary folk song in western Europe.

The majority of the British ballads record the dramas, the lives, the emotions, and the crimes of a past age, especially along the borders of Scotland, during the period of cattle thieving and border warfare A number tell of feuds and fights among rival clan chiefs of a bygone day.

Many of the 300-odd narrative pieces canonized by Professor Child – they are called familiarly today the "Child ballads" – have long since passed out of oral circulation. One hundred and forty, in full or fragmentary form, have been discovered in North America, where they were brought by British emigrants. Our research, done during the past decade, has unearthed fifty, still in circulation in Great Britain, most of which we reproduce in these two recordings (Volumes 4 and 5).[1]

A brief comparison of our list with American findings will perhaps be of interest. Nine ballads in our collection have not been found in America, or if so, only in fragments;[2] all of these are Scots and of special interest to Scots singers. A few ballads – among them **Little Musgrave, The House Carpenter, Young Hunting, Fair Margaret, The Wife Wrapped in the Wether's Skin, The Mermaid, The Wife of Usher's Well,** and **The Three Ravens** – all quite common in America, have not turned up in our recent work in Britain. Others – notably, **Lord Thomas, The Golden Vanity, The Farmer's Curst Wife** – are found very frequently in America and much less frequently in Great Britain, versions of the **Gypsy Laddie** and **The Trooper and the Maid** being far better known. Finally, certain ballads seem to be better remembered in Britain than in the U.S., among them: **The False Knight, Broomfield Hill, The Baffled Knight, Johnny Cock, The Braes of Yarrow, The Jolly Beggar, The Trooper and the Maid, Andrew Lammie** and the **Laird o'Drum.**

Even this contrastive view indicates that quite different preference patterns are at work in Britain and America. On the whole British folk singers are far less prudish than Americans and recall more ballads of gay love, of rape, of seduction and of illegitimate birth than one finds in an American list. By far our best sources have been the tinker singers of North East Scotland, who have given us full versions of certain ballads which rarely occur elsewhere, since they are of local interest or of special relevance to their lives. In fact, it appears that tinkers, travelers, and gypsies have recently played the principal role in the transmission of the Child ballads in the British Isles. Round their campfires the ballads are sung and ancient Gaelic legends are

1. Scholars will be interested in the ballads we have omitted. No. 54, **The Cherry Tree Carol,** (Gloucestershire) and **Dives and Lazarus,** (Herts) will be published in a later album. The others are: No. 105, **The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington** (Kent) No. 199, **The Bonny Hoose of Airlie** (Fetterangus) No. 205, **The Baron of Brackley** (Perth) No. 216, **Clydeswater** (Aberdeenshire) No. 223, **Eppie Morrie** (Buchan) No. 233, **Andrew Lammie** (Aberdeenshire) No. 236, **The Laird o' Drum** (Aberdeenshire) No. 240, **Bonny Rantin Laddie** (Buchan).

2. Nos. 19, 238, 251, 255, 281, 203, 216, 223.

told today as they were centuries ago. The stamp of tinker interest shows up in the popularity of such songs as **The Jolly Beggar, The Trooper and the Maid, The Gypsy Laddie.**

Here then are the ancient ballads of Britain, recorded from the lips of traditional singers in all parts of the islands, singing in the ways of their forefathers. Some of the performers have fine voices; other voices are old or hoarse. But all possess the true ballad art in some respect – the way of spinning the story and the poem together, not with the crude drama of the concert singer, but with the subtle nuance and understatement that is fitting to ballad art. The past speaks through their lips, but if you listen with attention you will discover fantasy patterns important to the present as well.

For the sake of brevity we have taken liberties with the texts. Some very long songs have been drastically cut; but the full text is reproduced where possible. Stanzas missing from the record appear in italics. In other cases we have spliced together a series of variants of a single ballad from various performances, so as to give the listener a notion of the range of melodic types. In several cases the songs have crossed the language barrier into Welsh and Irish Gaelic, although we have no case of such an occurrence in Scots Gaelic.

For those who wish to know more about this field we suggest a look at *The Ballad of Tradition,* by G. H. Gerrould, Oxford University Press; *English and Scottish Popular Ballads,* one volume ed. by G. L. Kittredge, Houghton and Mifflin; and *The Ballad Book,* by McEdward Leach. Each of the ballads is designated by its number in Child, and other key references will guide the reader to the vast comparative literature: COFFIN, *The British Traditional Ballad in North America,* Tristram Coffin, American Folklore Society, Philadelphia, Pa., 1950; GRIEG, *Last Leaves of Traditional Ballads,* Gavin Grieg, Aberdeen, 1925; GUIDE, *A Guide to English Folk Song Collections,* Margaret Dean-Smith, University Press, Liverpool, 1954; BRONSON, *The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads,* Vol. I, Princeton University Press, 1958; ORD, *Bothy Songs and Ballads,* J. Ord, Glasgow, 1930. I am grateful to Professor Coffin for his expert summaries of ballad history and controversy, upon which I have drawn liberally in the pages that follow.

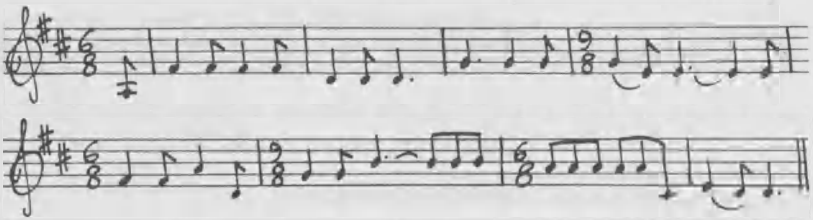
A. L.

VOLUME IV. SIDE A.

1. THE ELFIN KNIGHT (Child 2), two variants; *AN ACRE OF LAND,* sung by Bob and Ron Copper, Brighton, Sussex, England, recorded by P. Kennedy; *STRAWBERRY LANE,* sung by Thomas Moran, Mohill, Leitrim, Ireland, recorded by Seamus Ennis of the BBC Sound Archive.

This most widely known of the ancient riddling ballads in both Britain and America is sometimes given a story setting. A maiden in her bower hears the distant horn of the elfin knight, wishes he were with her and he immediately appears. Before he will become her lover, he demands that she answer a series of conundrums in rhyme. Many scholars feel, however, that this fairy drama was a late addition to a tradition in which riddles played a part in courtship, in puberty and fertility rites. Certainly, the sexual symbolism even in these contemporary versions is merely veiled, and the universal popularity of the song may, indeed, be due to the unconscious perception of the meaning of symbol-series. In the language of folk botany, for instance, rosemary stood for constancy and thyme for fecundity; and these herbs were put in a girl's pillow to bring on dreams of a future husband. Bronson says (p. 9) that the *sing-ivy* form of the tune appeared in Southern England in the 19th century; that the *every-rose* form goes back a century before; and that the oldest setting of the ballad is, perhaps, the *plaid-awa'* air, the tune for which appears in Vol. II of this series. See COFFIN, p. 30.

AN ACRE OF LAND (Copper)



1) My father had an acre of land,
   Heigh-ho sing ivy,
   My father had an acre of land,
   With a bunch of green holly and ivy.

2) He ploughed it with a team of rats.

3) He sowed it with a pepper box.

4) He harrowed it with a small tooth comb.

5) He rolled it in with a rolling pin.

6) He reaped it with the blade of his knife.

7) He wheeled it home in a wheelbarrow.

8) He thrashed it with a hazel-twig.

9) He winn'd it on the tail of his shirt.

10) *He measured it up with a walnut shell.*

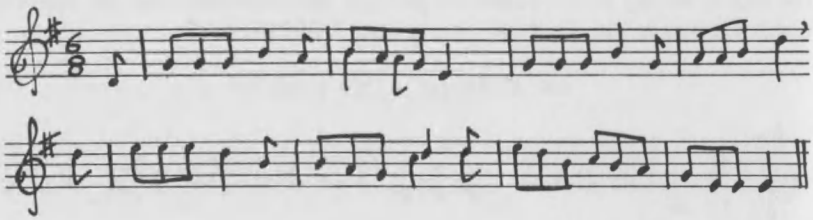
11) *He sent it to market on a hedgehog's back.*

12) *He sold the lot for eighteenpence,*
He sold the lot for one-and-six.

13) *And now the poor old man is dead.*

14) *We buried him with his team of rats,*
And all his tools laid by his side.

2. STRAWBERRY LANE (Moran)



1) Now as you are goin' down Strawberry Lane,
Every rose grows merry betimes,
It's there you will meet a pretty young man,
And tell him that he's a true lover of mine.

2) And tell him to get me a Holland shirt,
Every rose grows merry betimes,
Without stitch or seam or needlework,
And then he will be a true lover of mine.

3) And tell him to wash it in yon spring well,
Where water ne'er fell, nor water ne'er sprung.

4) And tell him to dry it on yon whin bush,
Where there ne'er grew a thorn since Adam was born.

5) *Now as you are goin' down Strawberry Lane,*
Every rose grows merry betimes,
It's there you will meet a pretty young man,
And tell him that he's a true lover of mine.

6) *And tell him to get me an acre of land,*
Every rose grows merry betimes,
Between the salt water and the sea strand,
And then he will be a true lover of mine.

7) *Tell him to plough it with yon deer's horn,*
And sow it all over with one grain of corn.

8) *And tell him to reap it with shavings o' leather,*
And bind it all up in a peacock's feather.

9) *Tell him to tackle a wran and draw it home,*
And build it all in a small mouse-hole.

10) *And tell him to thatch it with midges' claws,*
And rope it round with pismires' paws.

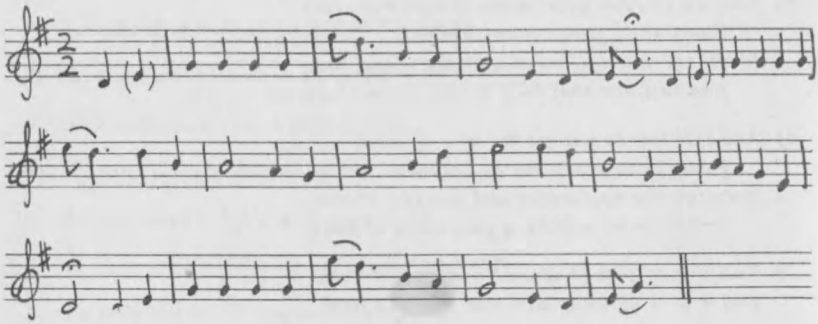
11) *And tell him to thresh it on yon church wall,*
And not let chaff or corn fall.

12) And when he has finished and done his work,
Every rose grows merry betimes,
Send him to me and I'll give him the shirt,
And then he will be a true lover *of mine.* (Spoken.)

3. THE FALSE KNIGHT ON THE ROAD, (Child 3), sung by Frank Quinn, Coalisland, Tyrone, Northern Ireland, recorded by Sean O'Boyle.

An old fisherman told Quinn that "the knight was some kind of emissary of the devil, some sort of a spectre or ghost like, that inhabited a certain part of the road. It was fatal for a person to move confrontin' this thing and this dialogue was a test of the child, to see if he was well fortified for the ultimate end." This story of encountering the Devil, of defying him, and often of routing him by saying God's name, is an old one. Bronson (p. 34) feels that the tune has a common ancestor, probably rooted in Scotland; thence it has spread to the United States and, in this case, to Northern Ireland. Indeed, Quinn had this song from his grandfather who came to live on Coal-Island in Lough Neagh, when he was a boy. Robbie Burns was the favorite poet of the district and his grandfather, who read Ovid among other good literature, taught him other ballads, such as "Lord Randall" and "Edward," also imported from Scotland. Perhaps the most interesting American version appears on the record, *Folk Music of Nova Scotia,* Band 21; Folkways FM 4006, Helen Creighton.

THE KNIGHT ON THE ROAD (Quinn)



1) "What brings you here so late?" said the knight on the road.
"I go to meet my God," said the child as he stood.
And he stood, and he stood,
And 'twere well he stood.
"I go to meet my God," said the child as he stood.

2) "How will you go by land?" said the knight on the road.
"With a strong staff in my hand," said the child as he stood.

3) "How will you go by sea?" said the knight on the road.
"With a good boat under me," said the child as he stood.

4) "Methinks I hear a bell," said the knight on the road.
"Aye, it's ringing you to hell," said the child as he stood.

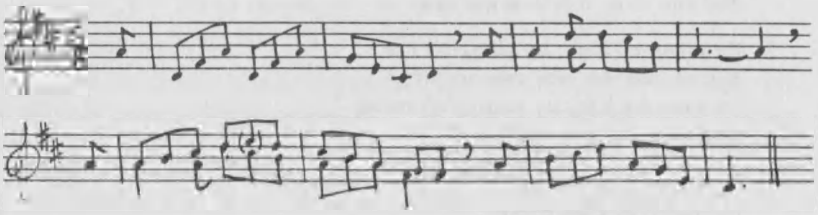
4. LADY ISABEL AND THE ELF KNIGHT, sung by Fred Jordan, Shropshire, England, and recorded by Peter Kennedy.

This form of the Bluebeard legend, the most widely distributed of all the ballads, is known from Scandanavia south to Italy, from Britain south to Italy, and in N. America as well. The wicked rake of our Shropshire variant is, in older versions, an elfin knight, who lured maidens away from home to murder them. Of the six variants printed by Child ours is closest to E, taken from J. H. Dixon's *Ancient Poems, Ballads, and Songs of the Peasantry of England.*

The singer, 31-year-old farm laborer Frank Jordon, has held to the style of singing which he picked up from his mother and from the old-timers he met at country pubs, "by being fond of country life in the old way, by always listening and talking to the old laborers, in order to learn the different jobs you have to know to be a farm laborer." Bronson (p. 39) points out that this air,

like that of **Strawberry Lane,** is an instance of the modern preference of the English singer for 6/8 tunes in major. For detailed discussion, see *Journal of American Folklore,* LXV, 1-2 and LXVIII, 141-53; also COFFIN, 32-35; GUIDE, 97.

THE OUTLANDISH KNIGHT (Jordan)



SINGER'S TITLE: "Six Pretty Maids"

1) It's of a young fellow from the North Counteree,
And he came "alluding" to me.
And he promised he'd take me up to the North Land
And there would marry me.

2) "Come bring to me your father's gold,
And your mother's wealth," said he.
"And the two best horses that stands in the stalls,
Where there stands thirty and three."

3) So she brought him out her father's gold,
And her mother's wealth brought she,
And the two best horses that stood in the stalls,
Where there stood thirty and three.

4) She mounted on a milk white steed,
Him on a dapple grey,
Many miles they rode till they reached the seaside,
Just as it was breaking a day.

5) "Come light, come light from off your steed,
Deliver him now unto me.
For six pretty fair maids I have drownded here,
The seventh one you shall be.

6) "Come strip me off your fine silken clothes
And all your jewels," said he;
"Far better I sell them for what they are worth
Than they rot with you under the sea."

7) "O stay, o stay, you false-hearted man,
And turn your head," said she.
"For not fitting it is that a ruffian like you
A naked lady should see."

8) So he turned his head while she undressed
To where the leaves grow green;
She caught him by the small of the waist
And she flung him into the sea.

9) He plung-ed high, he plung-ed low,
And at last the side reached he,
"O save my life, my pretty fair maid,
And my bride you shall be."

10) "Lie there, lie there, you false-hearted man,
Lie there instead of me.
For if six pretty fair maids you have drownded here,
The seventh one has drownded thee."

11) *So she mounted on her milk white steed,*
And she led his dapple grey,
And fast she rode till she reached her own house
Just as it was breaking the day.

12) *Now the parrot that was in the window so high*
Looked down as he saw her ride by;
"O where hast thou been, thou wilful child?
Some ruffian has led thee astray."

13) *"Don't prittle, don't prattle, my pretty Polly,*
And tell no tales of me.
And thy cage shall be made of the glittering gold,
And the door of the best ivory."

14) *"Why shout you so loud, my pretty Polly,*
So loud and so early, Polly?"
"O the cat has climbed up in the window so high,
And I fear that he will have me."

15) *"Well done, well done, my pretty Polly,*
You've changed your tale well for me;
So thy cage shall be made of the glittering gold,
And the door of the best ivory."

5. THE TWA SISTERS (Binnorie), Child 10, sung by John Strachan, Fyvie, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, recorded by Alan Lomax and Hamish Henderson.

Of all the ballads, this one was certainly danced as it was sung to one of several beautiful refrains . . .

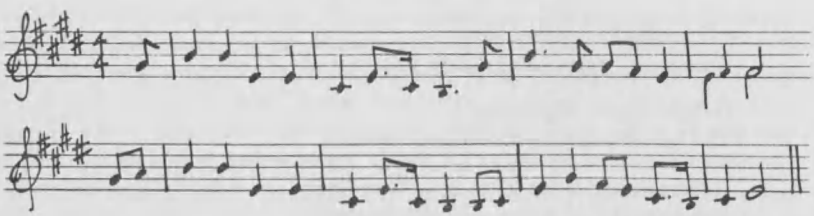
Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Sterling for aye,
Bonny St. Johnson stands on the Tay . . .

or

Bow down, bow down,
I'll be true to my true love,
If my love will be true to me . . .

Again an old story whose origins are lost in the mists of the past; this ballad may have a Slavic origin, for it is widely known in Slavic folklore. Archer Taylor (JAFL, XLII, 238ff.) argues that the ballad form may have come into Great Britain from Scandinavia before 1600, but Bronson (p. 143) denies this. In Scotland and on the continent the body of the dead girl is found by a harper who makes strings for his harp from her hair; and, when he plays this instrument at the court of her father, the human harp accuses the wicked sister and she is brought to justice. Child prints twenty versions; in one of these, a broadside which appeared in 1656, the miller makes a viol of the drowned girl's body. The idea recurs again in the well-known nonsense piece, **The Jolly Herring,** but it is absent in most English and American copies. For references, see: J. ORD, *Bothy Songs and Ballads,* Glasgow, 1930; COFFIN 38; GUIDE 113; Grieg 9.

BINNORIE (Strachan)



1) There were two sisters lived in a glen,
Binnorie O Binnorie,
And the bonny miller laddie came a-courtin' o' them,
By the bonny mill dams o' Binnorie.

2) "O sister, o sister, will ye take a walk
Aroon' by the dams o' Binnorie,
For to hear the blackbird whistle o'er his notes,
By the bonny mill dams o' Binnorie?"

3) They walked up and sae did they doon,
And roond by the dams o' Binnorie,
Till the elder stepped aside and dang the younger in
To the deep mill dams o' Binnorie.

4) "O sister, o sister, stretch oot your hand,
Binnorie O Binnorie,
And I'll gie you my gold and a theft o' my land,
For the bonnie miller laddie o' Binnorie."

5) "It was never your money that I dang ye in,
Binnorie O Binnorie.
It's you being so fair, love, and I so very grim
And for the bonny miller laddie o' Binnorie."

6) O miller, o miller, rend oot your dam,
Binnorie O Binnorie.
For there's some grand lady or some deid swan
Floating up and doon the dams o' Binnorie.

Further stanzas from ORD . . .

The miller quickly drew the dam
And there he found a drowned woman,

Round about her middle sma'
There was a gowden girdle bra';

All amang her yellow hair
A string o' pearls was twisted rare;

On her fingers lily-white
The jewel rings were shining bright.

By there cam' a harper fine,
Who harped to nobles when they dine;

And when he looked that lady on,
He sighed and made a heavy moan.

He's ta'en three locks o' her yellow hair
And wi' them strung his harp so rare.

He went into her father's hall
And played his harp before them all.

And sune the harp sang loud and clear
Farewell – my father and mither dear.

And neist when the harp began to sing,
Twas farewell, sweetheart, said the string.

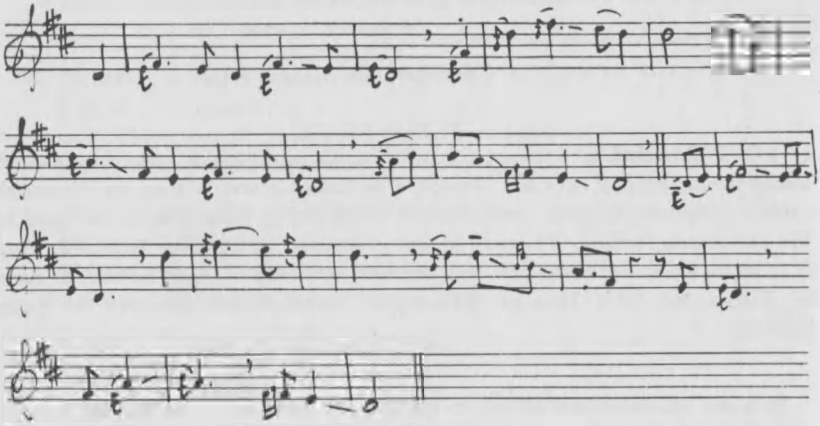
And then as plain as plain could be,
There sits my sister wha drowned me.

6. LORD RANDALL, a composite of several versions: **A** sung by Jeannie Robertson, Aberdeen, Scotland, recorded by Alan Lomax; **B** sung by Elizabeth Cronin, Macroom, County Cork, Ireland, recorded by Alan Lomax; **C** sung by Thomas Moran, Mohill, Leitrim, Ireland, recorded by Seamus Ennis; **D** sung in Irish by Colm McDonagh, Galway, Ireland, recorded by Alan Lomax; **E** sung by Eirlys and Edis Thomas, Glamorgan, South Wales, recorded by Peter Kennedy.

In many versions the victim is christened Tyrannty or something of the sort. Scholars have suggested that perhaps this curious name came from the Latin "Tyrannus," which the folk heard as "to, Randall." Perhaps the direction of change ran the other way and "to, Randall" was heard "Tyrantie." Anne Gilchrists suggests (JFSS III, 44) that he was Randall III, 6th Earl of Chester, who died in 1232 with a hint of poisoning mixed up in his story. Whatever he was called – Lord Randall or Donald or Jimmie Randall, or Durango or Poor Anzo or Johnny Randle – he was a victim of woman's perfidy. Usually his sweetheart poisons him with snakes served as eels or fishes, or with poisonous toads or some other loathsome dish. But in other, possibly older forms, his grandmother or stepmother is the villainess. Thus Barry (*British Ballads From Maine*, p. 71) argues that possibly the boy delivers his last will and testament to the ghost of his dead mother. Bronson (p. 191) makes the point that, in all its widespread forms throughout the continent (for instance in the Italian **L'Avvelenata**), the question and answer form remain the same. This story is so powerful that one never stops to ask why Randall was murdered by a woman, for we all instantly accept the intensity of feminine anger. For references see: P.W. JOYCE, *Old Irish Music and Songs*, Dublin, 1909; DOUGLAS HYDE, Erin, II, 77; C. HARDEBECK, Fiunn Fiada Fuinidh; ORD (op cit) p. 458; COFFIN 42; GUIDE 85; GRIEG 13.

A. This is only a part of the complete performance of **Lord Donald** which can be heard on Collector Record lp. JFS 4001. **B.** Old Mrs. Cronin, one of the most accomplished of Irish folk singers could only recall this fragment. **C.** We have space for only a part of the whole sung by Moran to a bagpipe cadence that begins on the 7th and drops to the keynote via the 5th. **D.** Here we have only the introduction (often sung to a variant melody) to a full performance of a ballad in the "big" and highly ornate style of the far west of Ireland. **E.** Two stanzas of a Welsh variant, which show again how the big ballads can cross language and culture barriers.

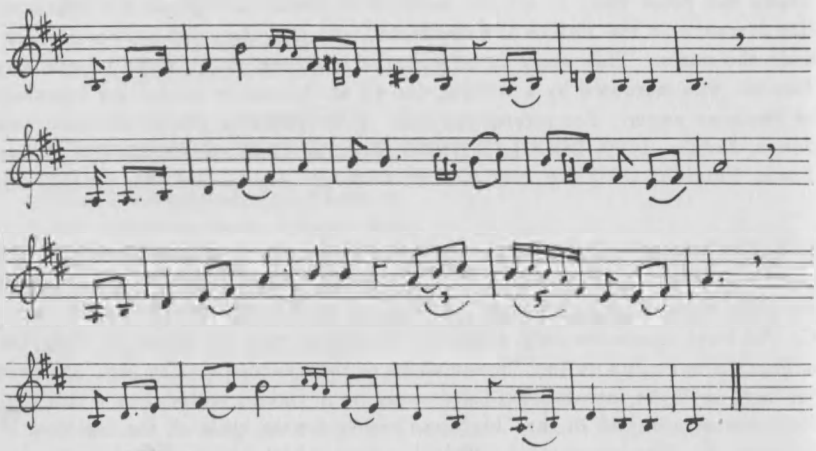
A. Jeannie Robertson



Whaur hae ye been all the day, Lord Donald, my son?
Whaur hae ye been all the day, my jolly young man?

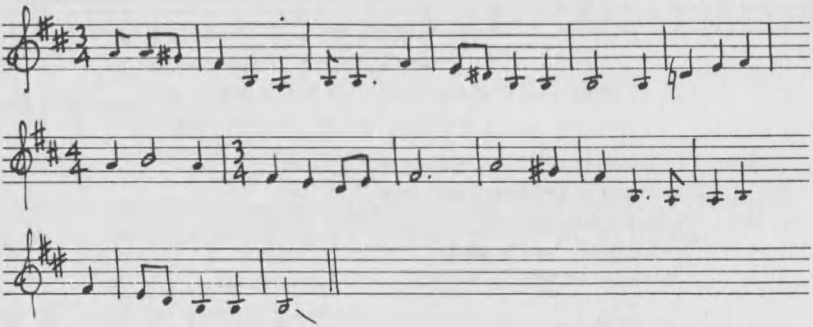
Awa' courtin', mither, mak' my bed soon,
For I am sick at the hairt and I fain wad lie doon.

B. Elizabeth Cronin



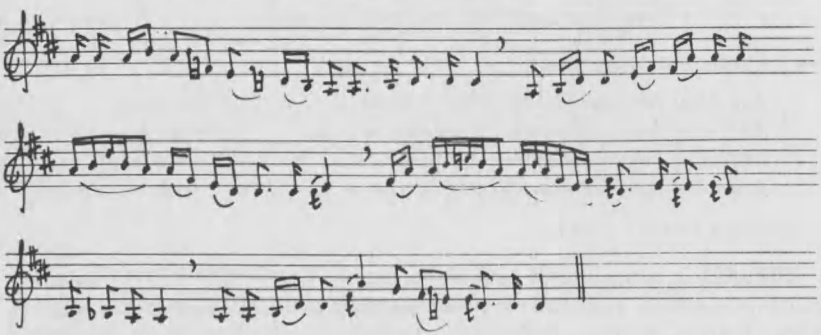
What did you have for your breakfast, my own darling boy?
What did you have for your breakfast, my comfort and joy?
A cup of cold poison, mother, dress my bed soon,
For there's a pain through my heart and I'd want to lie doon.

C. Thomas Moran



What will you leave to your mother, my love, hope and joy?
The gates of hell open, so make my bed now
For I'm sick to the heart and I long to lie down.

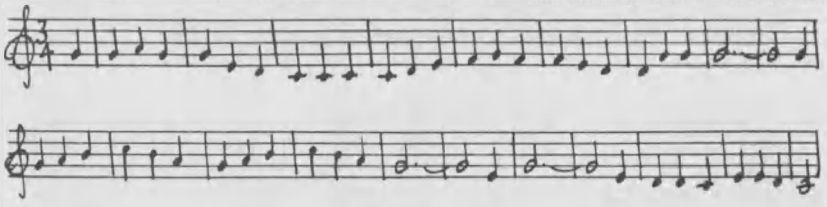
D. Ca raibh tu ar feadh an lae? Colin McDonagh



(Translation:)

What had you for your dinner, o brother?
What had you for your dinner, o flower of young men?
An eel that was twisted with red blood pressed on it,
I'm sick at heart and must lie down.

E. O fy mab anwyl. Eirlys & Edis Thomas



She: Ple buost ti neithiwr, mab anwyl dy fam,
Ple buost ti neithiwr, mab anwyl dy fam,
He: Pysgota, mam anwyl, o ch'weiriwch fy ngwely,
'Rwy'n glaf, 'rwy'n glaf,
A'm calon ar fyned i'r bedd.

O all the night where were you, mother's dear son?
O all the night where were you, mother's dear son?
Last night I was fishing, oh make up my bed
For I'm sick, I'm sick,
And my heart's on the brink of the grave.

She: Paliw oedd dy bysgod, mab anwyl dy fam? (2)
He: Rhai brithion, mam anwyl, o ch'weiriwch fy ngwely, etc. .

And what color were the fish, mother's dear son? (2)
They were speckled and sparkled, etc. .

Rest of story (not sung here):

And what for your father: Five pounds *(Pum punt)*
And what for your sister: A sewing machine *(Injian i wnio)*
And what for your mother: A fortune *(Ffortiwn)*
And what for your sweetheart: A rope to hang her *(Cortyn iw chrogi)*

7. EDWARD, a composite of several versions: **A,** *MY SON DAVID,* sung by Jeannie Robertson, recorded by Peter Kennedy and Alan Lomax; **B,** sung by Paddy Tunney, Beleek, Fermanagh, Ireland, recorded by Peter Kennedy; **C,** sung by Angela Brasil (15 years old), England, recorded by Peter Kennedy.

Prior to the recent finds by Peter Kennedy among the traveling folk and tinkers, scholars believed that this, considered the most perfect of the tragic ballads, was far better known in Scandinavia and America than in Britain. Now it is clear the traveler group has a strong attachment for this ancient story, which sometimes concerns fratricide (as here) and elsewhere parricide, with

the mother the real villain. Jeannie Robertson, the great ballad singer of Aberdeenshire, explains her family tradition about the story as follows: "David and John were rich man's sons and David was the eldest, but John was headstrong and wanted to be master. David wouldn't have that and they fought and David killed him." In Scandinavian custom a brother-slayer was punished by being put out to sea in an open boat without oars or sails, and this end is reflected in Jeannie's beautiful final stanza . . .

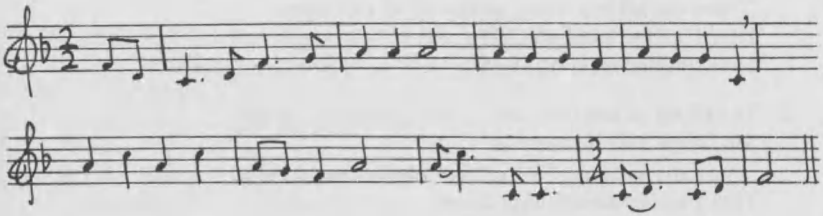
O when will you come back again
My son David, ho son, David,
When the sun and the moon meets in yon glen,
Hi, lady mother, ho lady mother,
Then I'll return again.

In the classic Percy form printed by Child, the incest motive is clear and, when the mother asks her son what he plans to will to her, he replies:

The curse of hell,
Sic counsels ye gave to me . . .

BRONSON (p. 237) feels that this version may be a literary rehandling of the song by Percy. COFFIN, 45, concludes, after a review of all the scholarship, that the story originally concerned a quarrel between two brothers over their sister. For a full study of all versions, see Archer Taylor, *Edward and Sven I Rosengard,* 1935.

A. Jeannie Robertson



1) O what's the blood that's on your sword,
My son, David, ho son David?
What's that blood, it's on your sword?
Come, promise, tell me true.

2) O that's the blood of my grey mare,
Hi, lady mother, ho, lady mother.
That's the blood of my grey mare
Because she wouldnae rule by me.

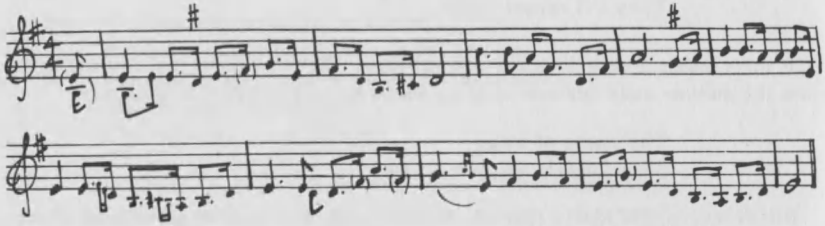
3) O that blood it is ower clear,
My son, David, ho son David.
That blood it is ower clear,
Come, promise, tell me true.

4) *O that's the blood of my greyhound*

5) *O that blood it is ower clear*

6) *O that's the blood of my brother John, etc.*

B. Paddy Tunney



1) What brought the blood on your right shoulder, dear?
Son, come tell it unto me.
'Twas the killing of a hare that I killed today,
That I killed most manfully-ee,
That I killed most manfully.

2) The blood of the old hare it could never be so red,
Son, come tell it unto me.
'Twas the killing of a boy that I killed today,
That I killed most manfully-ee,
That I killed most manfully.

3) What are you going to do with your two race-horses?
Son, come tell it unto me.
I will take the bridles off their necks,
For they'll run no more for me-ee,
For they'll run no more for me.

4) What are you going to do with your two fine grey-hounds?
Son, come tell it unto me.
O I'll take the leads from off their necks,
For they'll race no more for me-ee,
For they'll race no more for me.

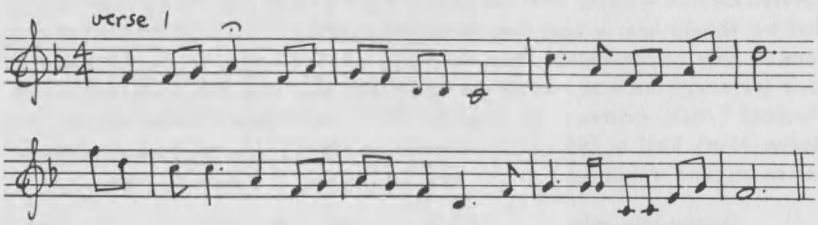
5) What are you going to do with your houses and your lands?
Son, come tell it unto me.
I will lay them bare to the birds of the air,
For there's no more welcome there for me-ee,
For there's no more welcome there for me.

Verses not included on the record: (as sung by Mrs. Conners but not by P.T.)

1) *Where have you been a' the whole afternoon?*
I was fishin' and fowlin' the whole day long,
By mother's perjurie-ee.

4) *What come between yourself and the boy?*
It was mostly the cuttin' of a rod,
That would never come a tree - tree.

C. Angela Brasil (age 15)



1) What will you do when your father comes to know?
Son, come tell it unto me.
I will step my foot on board of ship,
And sail to a foreign counteree.

2) What will you do with your two fine children?
Son, come tell it unto me.
I'll give one to my father and one to my mother
To keep them company.

3) What will you do with your lovely wife?
Son, come tell it unto me.
I will dress her up in a jolly sailor suit,
And she'll sail on board with me.

4) O son, o son, when will you return?
Son, come tell it unto me.
When the moon and the sun will both shine as one,
And that's what you never will see.
(Spoken) That's it all . . .

Verses performed by singer and not on the record:

1) *What is the blood on your left shoulder?*
That is the blood of my own brother
That I killed so manderly.

2) *What did you kill your own dear brother?*
Because he shot my two turtle doves
That flew from tree to tree.

8. KING ORFEO, Child 19, sung by John Stickle, Lerwick, Shetland, recorded by Patrick Shuldham-Shaw.

It is a common experience to hear songs and tales in Gaelic about persons kidnapped by the little people, but such ancient lore has almost disappeared in other parts of the west. According to Bronson (p. 275), this melody is also very ancient. "That a tune should in the midst of the 20th century be recovered for this whisper from the Middle Ages was as little to be expected as that we should hear a horn from elfinland blowing. . . ." Child printed one version only of the ballad, but when Patrick Shaw went to the Shetland to look for songs he was shown the following text that had appeared in the *Shetland Times,* written down from the recitation of Bruce Sutherland of Turf House, North Yell in 1865. The refrain was clearly derived from the Scandinavian original which runs . . .

Skoven arle grön — Early green's the wood . . . . . .
Hvor hjorten han gar arlig — Where the hart goes yearly . . . .

1) *There lived a lady in yon Haa*
Scowan orla grona
Her name was Lady Lisa Bell
Where gurtin grew for Norla.

2) *One day the King a-hunting went;*
They wounded the lady to the heart.

3) *The King of the Fairies wi' his dart*
Wounded his lady to the heart.

4) *So when the King came home at noon,*
He asked for Lady Lisa Bell.

5) *His nobles unto him did say,*
My lady was wounded but noo she is dead.

6) *Now they have ta'en her life fra me,*
But her corpse they's never ha'.

7) *Now he have called his nobles aa*
To waltz her corpse into the Haa.

8) *But when the Lords was faen asleep*
Her corpse out of the houses did sweep.

9) *Now he's awa' to the wood, wood were,*
And there he's to sit till grown o'er wi' hair.

10) *He had not sitten seven lang years*
Till a company to him drew near.

11) *Some did ride and some did ging,*
He saw his lady them among.

12) *There stood a Haa upon yon hill,*
There went aa the Ladies tilt.

13) *He is laid him on his belly to swim,*
When he came it was a gray stone.

14) *Now he's set him down ful wae,*
And he's taen out his pipes to play.

15) *First he played the notes of noy,*
Then he played the notes of joy.

16) *And then he played another reel*
That might a made a sick heart heal.

17) *There came a boy out of the Haa*
Ye're bidden to come in among us aa.

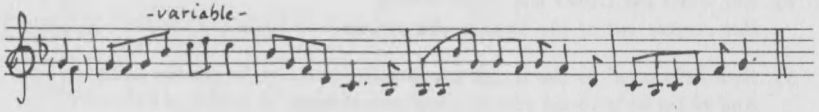
18) *The foremost man to him did say*
What thou ha' for thy play.

19) *For my play I will thee tell*
I'll ha' my Lady Lisa Bell.

20) *Thy sister's son, that unworthy thing,*
Tomorrow is to be crowned King.

21) *But thou's take her and thou's go hem,*
And thou shalt be king o'er thy own.

Still no tune had ever been recorded for the ballad. Then one day Mr. Shaw was visiting John Stickle in the island of Unst and the two began talking about nonsense songs. "Have you ever," said Mr. Stickle, "heard anything as nonsensical as this." Mr. Stickle then proceeded to sing him the song here reproduced, and he failed to understand how his London friend could be so excited over a bit of nonsense that he had never been able to get out of his mind. See COFFIN, 50.



1) Will ye come in into our ha'?
   Scowan earl grey.
   Ye will come in into your ha',
   For yetter kangra norla.

2) And we'll come in into your ha',
   And we'll come in among you a'.

3) First you played the notes o' noy,
   And then you played the notes o' joy.

4) And then you played a good old gabber reel,
   What might ha' made a sick hairt heal.

9. THE CRUEL MOTHER, Child 20, sung by Thomas Moran, Mohill, Leitrim, recorded by Seamus Ennis for the BBC Sound Archives.

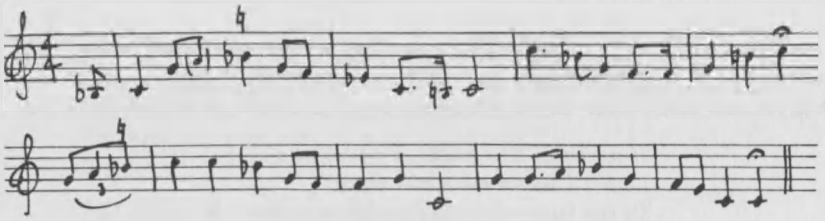
A girl, about to be married, discovers she is pregnant by the wrong man. She wished to appear a virgin. She "leans her back against a thorn, and there the pretty babes are born," and then murders her newborn babes. In some forms of the story, she cannot wash the blood off her knife. In others she throws her knife into a stream and it returns to her hand, again and again. Sometime later, as she is walking in the fields, she meets the ghosts of her children and begs them to come back to her. At this point, our version, with its medieval notions about the redemption of the lost soul, begins.

Once upon a time this was one of the best loved ballads of England, as shown by the large number of beautiful variants of the tunes and by the poignant grace of the refrains . . . .

Fine flowers in the valley . . .
And the green leaves, they grow rarely . . .

Now the rose and the lindsay-o,
Down by the greenwood side-i-o . . . .

In the past two centuries, however, it has dropped out of currency in Britain, meanwhile retaining its popularity among American ballad singers See: COFFIN 50; GRIEG 21; GUIDE 21; ORD 459.



1) O your first little child with the golden locks,
   All along and a-lonely-o.
   And you've buried him under your own bed stock,
   Down by the greenwood sidey-o.

2) You've buried three more on your way going home,
   And you've buried three more on that butting stone.

3) Well, you'll be seven long years a wolf in the woods,
   And you'll be seven long years a fish in the floods.

4) You'll be seven long years a ringing the bell,
   And you'll be seven long years a-burning in hell.

5) Well, I'd like very well to be a wolf in the woods,
   And I'd like very well to be a fish in the floods.

6) I'd like very well to be ringing the bell,
   But the Lord may save my soul from hell.

10. THE BROOMFIELD WAGER, sung by Cyril Poacher, at the Ship Inn, Blaxhall, Suffolk, England, recorded by Peter Kennedy.

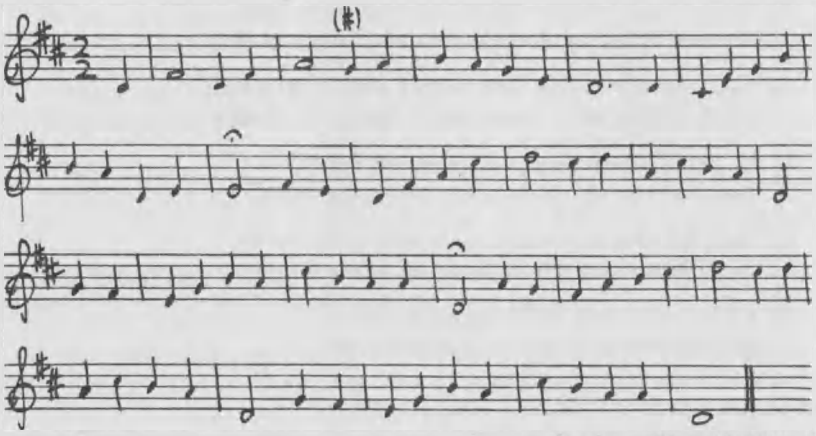
Cyril Poacher is the heart and soul, as well as the master of ceremonies, of the Saturday night sing-songs at the Ship Inn, in the marshy land along the Suffolk Coast. He wears a sporty cap pulled down over his eyes, winks knowingly at his audience, and calls for order like the chairman of a committee. Despite all outward signs of modernity, however, Cyril and his audience are linked, in fantasy, with the past of Britain. One of their favorite ballads deals sympathetically with Napoleon's son, but equally popular is this story out of European pre-history, in which a girl is required to go forth and defend her maidenhead by magic against a savage horseman, out of the ancient Aryan past. Yet Cyril is in perfect rapport with his crowd as he sings.

The oldest Child versions tell a longer story. The maid wagers with the knight that she can come alone into the fields and return home a virgin. She

consults a witch and is told about the magical powers of broomflowers. She ventures forth, finds her knight asleep, strews the magic plants round him and then returns safe home. In one Kentucky version the knight wakes and says,

If my hawk had wakened me while I slept,
Of her I would have had my will,
Or the buzzards that fly high over the sky
Of her flesh would have had their fill.

Thus a tale of pagan magic lived in the hills of the South. In this gentler English version the heroine hides in the bushes to watch her lover's reaction when he wakes, and the only trace of magic that remains is her nine-times challenging walk around her sleeping lover. See: COFFIN 57; GRIEG 56; GUIDE 31.



"Order, please, ladies and gentlemen, respect the Chair. I have much pleasure in calling on me old friend Mr. C. P. to oblige with a small ditty. . ."

1) O wager, O wager, O wager I'll lay you,
I'll lay you five thousands to your one,
That a maiden I'll go to that merry broomfield,
And a maiden I'm sure I will return.
That a maiden I'll go to that merry broomfield,
And a maiden I'm sure I will return. (HOLD THE WHEEL)

2) And then did this young maid back on a bay hobby's back,
All for to ride to that green broom,
And when she got there she found her own true love
Lying in that merry green broom fast asleep.
Etc. .

3) Nine times did she walk round the crown of his head,
Nine times round the sole of his feet (O OF HIS FEET)
Nine times did she say, "Awake, master,
For your own true love is standing nearby."
Etc. .

4) And when she had done all she dare do,
She stepped behind that bunch of green broom (OF GREEN BROOM)
All for to hear what her own true love should say
When he awoke out of his domestic sleep.
Etc. .

5) He said, "If I had been awake instead of being asleep,
My will I would have done toward thee.
Your blood it would have been spilt for those small birds to drink,
And your flesh it would have been for their food."

6) *You hard-hearted young man, how could you say so?*
Your heart it must be hard as any stone,
For to murder the one that lov-ed you so well,
Far better than the ground that you stand on.

7) *Nine times of this bell did I ring, master,*
Nine times of that whip did I snap;
Nine times did I say, "Awake, master,
For your own true love is standing nearby."

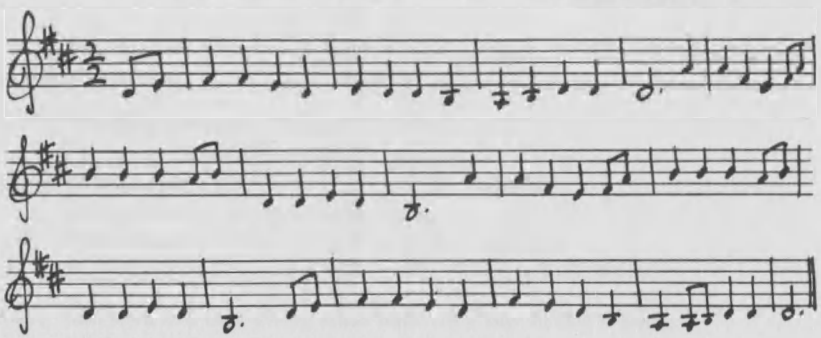
1. CAPTAIN WEDDERBURN'S COURTSHIP, as sung by Seamus Ennis, Dublin, Ireland, recorded by Peter Kennedy.

Very often printed in British songsters in the 18th and early 19th century, this risqué riddling ballad became popular in Ireland and thence, probably, was carried itself to New England, where it has been often found since. Again it is a question whether the story form was imposed upon the riddling sequence or whether the reverse was the case. Of the well-known riddling songs there are three forms – the well known **I Gave My Love a Cherry,** found in the Southern Mountains by Cecil Sharp, published by him in *English Folk Songs of The Southern Appalachians,* II, 190, and thence popularized by Burl Ives; the English and New England **I Gave My Love An Apple;** and **Perrie Merrie Dictum Dominie,** found in England and the Northeast.

Certainly the theme of the ingenious suitor is an ancient one. It forms the plot of many fairy stories, occurs in the Arabian Nights and in Greek collections. Again in this ballad form we encounter the pagan notion that a woman encountered alone and unprotected is fair game and must expect to yield to her captor, unless she is wittier than he. The lusty keeper makes his demands upon the Captain's daughter. She counters by asking a group of three riddles, then a group of four, which, according to ancient courting custom, he must be able to answer correctly or give her up. Apparently the lady is pleased and impressed by his success, for the ballad concludes . . .

Little did this lady think that morning when she raise,
That this was for to be the last o' a' her maiden days.
But there's na into the king's realm to be found a blither twa,
And now she's Mrs. Wedderburn, and she lies to the wa'.

For references see: COFFIN 59, GRIEG 33, ORD 416, GUIDE 100.



1) Now a gentleman's fair daughter walked down a narrow lane,
She met with Captain Wedderburn, the keeper of the game;
He said unto his servant man, "If it were not for the law,
I would have that maid in bed with me, and she'd lie next the wall."

2) "O then go your way, young man," she says, "And do not bother me.
Before you'll lie one night with me you must answer me questions three;
Three questions you must answer me whilst I set forth them all,
Before you lie one night with me at either stock or wall.

3) "For my breakfast you must get for me a cherry without a stone;
For my dinner you must get for me a bird without a bone;
For my supper you must get for me a bird without a gall,
Ere you and I in one bed lie or I lie next the wall."

4) "Well, the cherry when in blossom, it surely has no stone;
The bird when it is in the egg, it surely has no bone;
The dove it is a gentle bird, and flies without a gall,
So you and I in one bed will lie and you'll lie next the wall."

5) "O then go your way, young man," she said, "And do not me perplex.
Before you'll lie one night with me, you must answer me questions six,
Six questions you must answer me whilst I set forth them all,
Before I lie one night with you at either stock or wall.

6) "O what is rounder than a ring, what's higher than the tree?
And what is worse than women's wrath, what is deeper than the sea?
What bird sings best, what tree buds first, and on it the dew first fall?
Ere you and I in one bed lie or I lie next the wall."

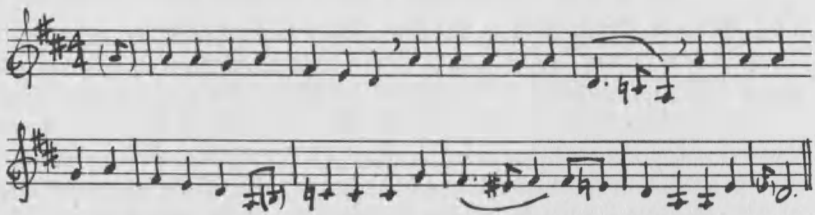
7) The world is rounder than a ring, heaven's higher than the tree;
The devil is worse than women's wrath, and hell is deeper than the sea;
The lark sings best and the oak buds first and on it the dew first falls,
So you and I in one bed will lie, and you'll lie next the wall."

8) *"You must get for me some winter fruit that in December grew;*
You must get for me a silk mantle that weft nor warp went through,
A sparrow's horn and a priest unborn to wed us both in twa,
Ere you and I in one bed lie or I lie next the wall."

9) *"Well, my father has some winter fruit that in December grew;*
My mother has a silk mantle that weft nor warp went through;
A sparrow's horn is easy found, there is one in every claw;
And Melkisitik was a priest unborn – and you'll lie next the wall!"

2. THE TWA BROTHERS, Child 49, sung by Lucy Stewart, Fetterangus Aberdeenshire, Scotland, recorded by Peter Kennedy.

This dream-like ballad of fratricide must be very old, but it was not discovered until the beginning of the 19th century and then only in Scotland and the United States. In America it often occurs as a children's song and in Scotland it seems to be especially liked by the tinkers. The plot varies considerably. In some versions the killing seems to be accidental, and the dying brother tried to help his murderer with an alibi. In others the two brothers quarrel over land, over a girl and, occasionally, over their sister. The present version, sung in an old mode but with the modern chromatic style of decoration at present popular among traveling folk, has a surprising conclusion, in which the step-mother is blamed by the dying boy. The singer, who belongs to the singing Stewart family of Aberdeenshire, lived on the roads as a canvasser when she was young but now, at fifty, raises poultry on a small croft. For references see: COFFIN 60, SHARP (op cit) I, 69; BRONSON, 384.



1) Two pretty boys they were going to the school;
In the evening coming home,
Said the biggest boy to the littlest boy,
"O can you throw a stone?
O can you throw a stone?"

2) "I can neither throw a stone,
Or little can I play at the ball.
If you come down to this merry greenwoods
I will try you a wrastling fall."

3) *Then they went down to the merry greenwoods,*
The biggest threw the littlest down;
Then John took out a little pen-knife,
And stabbed William to the ground.

4) *"O brother, dear, o brother, dear,*
What makes you pale and wan?"
"Do you not see by the light of the moon
That my heart's blood's trickling down?"

5) *He took off his lily-white shirt*
And he tore it from gore to gore;
And wrapped it round his lily-white breast,
But the blood came ten times more.

6) *"It's what will your dear father say*
This night when you go home?"
"Tell him I'm away to a London school,
And a good boy I'll return."

7) "O what will your dear stepmother think
This night when you go home?
Tell her the last prayer she prayed for me
That I would ne'er come home."

3. LORD BATEMAN (Young Beichan), Child 53, two versions, sung by: **A,** Thomas Moran, ibid.; **B,** Jeannie Robertson, recorded by Peter Kennedy.

Found in every quarter of the English-speaking world and in many forms, the frequent occurrence of this unusually long ballad is probably due to its popularity with the broadside press. Bronson, however, notes that the vigor and variety of its melodic tradition shows that this ballad has been constantly supported by the oral tradition. Print probably helped to keep the song intact, as singers refreshed their memories from the broadside texts, and then varied the tune and the story in small details.

The yarn is a medieval romance with a happy ending. A restless young man goes voyaging or to the Crusades, is captured by pirates or Moors, and freed by the gaoler's daughter. The couple vow not to marry anyone else for seven years. When this time is up, the Turkish lady sails for England, arrives just in time for the wedding, identifies herself and the faithful swain sends his new bride home. Her farewell speech, not often recalled in this censorious age, has a delightful lusty ring to it . . .

Is this the custom o' your house or the fashion o' the land,
To marry a maid in the May morning and send her back at even?

The folk have had a fine time with the Turkish lady's name, calling her variously – Suzanne, Sophia, Silky, Susie Free, Honey, Susan Spicer, Susie Pines, and here, Shuzy Pie. For references see: COFFIN, 63; GRIEG, 85; GUIDE, 40. Full texts are very common in the U.S.

A. Thomas Moran

Singer's Title: Lord Bacon

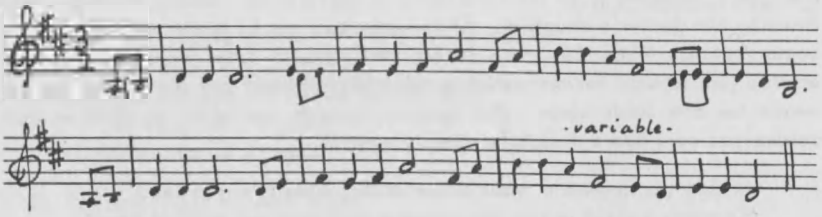
1) O Lord Bacon he was a rich man,
O then and a man of a high degree;
O then he got ready all his golds and monies
And he vowed strange counteries he would go see.

2) O then he sailed east O and he sailed west
Until he sailed into Cumberland.
And he was taken by a heathen king,
By a heathen king O Lord Bacon was.

3) He bored a hole O a'through his right shoulder
And he bound him up to the oak so strong;
He bound him up to the oak so strong
Until of his life he was quite wear-ee.

4) It happened to be upon a holiday
When the king's fair daughter was passing by;
And as she looked in upon the prisoner's window,
'Twas on Lord Bacon she cast her eye.

B. Jeannie Robertson



Singer's Title: Susan Pyatt

1) There is a lady at our hall door,
She's the prettiest lady I've ever seen;
She's as muckle gold round her middle small
That would buy Northumberlan' and set it free.

2) I'll bet you one pound against a penny
It's my young Susan Pyatt from across the sea;
For it's you come here on a horse and saddle,
I'll put you back by a coach and three.

(All this singer could recall)

Here is the remainder of Moran's text.

5) *"O then have you houses, young man," she says,*
"Or have you livings in your own country?
Or what would you give to a lady fair
O that out of Turkey-land would set you free?"

6) *"O then I have houses, my dear," he says,*
"O an I have livings in my own country.
I'd give them all to a lady fair
O that out of Turkey-land wouldn't set me free."

7) *She brought him into her father's cellar*
O then where they took cake and wine,
And every toast O that she drank towards him
"I wish Lord Bacon that you were mine."

8) *O your hand and promise you'll give to me,*
My faith and troth I will give to thee,
That you'll never marry for seven long years
Unless you marry to another one.

9) *O this seven long years they were past and gone,*
And then the eighth it was coming on,
And she stole the keys of her father's treasure
And she vowed Lord Bacon she would go see.

10) *O then she sailed east O and she sailed west*
Until she sailed into Cumberland,
And she enquired for Lord Bacon's castle
As far as ever she couldn't understand.

11) *O then when she came to Lord Bacon's castle,*
She tinkled lowly then at a ring,
"Who's that? Who's that?" said the brave old porter,
"That raps so low and wouldn't fain be in?"

12) *"O then is Lord Bacon himself at home?*
O or is that worthy young lord within?"
"Well, he's in the hall among his nobles all,
And upon this very day his new bride brought in."

13) *"Tell him to send me a cut of his wedded bread,*
O then and a glass of his wine so strong,
All in remembrance of the lady fair
O that set him free out of Turkey-land."

14) *O then up he comes, the brave old porter*
And threw himself lowly upon his knee,
"O get up, get up O my brave old porter,
Or what makes all this curse to thee?"

15) *"Well, I'm at your gates O this seven long years,*
And now the eighth it is coming on,
And the fairest lady e'er my eyes beheld,
She stands at your gates and wouldn't fain be in.

16) *It's on her finger she wears a gold ring,*
And on her middle one she wears three,
She has more gold laces around her waist
Than would purchase Cumberland and set him free.

17) *She told me to send her a cut of your wedded bread,*
O then and a glass of your wine so strong,
All in remembrance of the lady fair
O that set you free out of Turkey-land."

18) *His chairs and tables he left aside,*
O mugs, jugs and glasses he made them fly,
"I'll wager you all my houses and livings
That Susie's fairest has followed me."

19) *Now then out bespoke O the young bride's mother,*
And an angry woman indeed was she;
"You might accept the one you got,
Or some other one in her compan-ie."

20) *"O then can't you give her to your brother, John,*
He's a far more worthy young lad than thee."
"I would not accept of his brother John,
Nor his brother John might not accept of me.
But give me back of my faith and troth
And I will sail over to my own counttrie."

21) *"Your bride is bonny, your bride is comely,*
But indeed she's nothing the worse of me,
She come here in an open car,
And she may go back in her coach and three.

22) *"Your bride is bonny, your bride is comely,*
But indeed, she's nothing the worse of me.
She come here with one peck of gold,
And at her returnin' she may bring three."

4. LORD THOMAS AND FAIR ELLEN, Child 73, sung by Jessie Murray, Portnockie, Buchan, Scotland, recorded by Alan Lomax and Hamish Henderson.

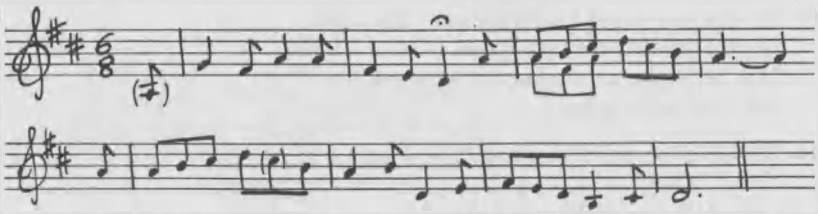
The commonest and best preserved of the big ballads in America, **Lord Thomas** seems to be scarcely remembered in Great Britain. To explain this problem away by saying that this song was frequently printed in songsters is to beg the question, for editors try to please their public. Its American popularity confirms a pattern. Ballads reflecting extreme sexual jealousy have in the past centuries lost their public in Britain, while they have kept it in the U.S. The frequent occurrence of **Little Musgrave** in America and its disappearance in Britain is a case in point.

The present version from Scotland, in fact, not only botches the story but omits the entire theme of jealousy and its bloody aftermath. In the old Scots and the contemporary American versions, the story runs as follows. Lord Thomas is torn between marrying the Brown Girl, who has property, and landless Fair Ellen, whom he loves. (Germanic literary tradition has traditionally shown a marked preference for blond heroines, except in the sixteenth century, when nut-brown maids became temporarily fashionable.)

The mother advises Lord Thomas to choose the richer one, and he invites his true love Ellen to his wedding. She hesitates, then dresses herself beautifully and makes such an entrance at the wedding party that the Brown Girl is overcome by jealousy and stabs her. Lord Thomas cuts the Brown Girl's head off, then falls on his sword and the three lovers are buried in the same grave. The ballad maker, being nothing if not partisan, tells us . . .

They put Fair Ellen all in his arms,
And the Brown Girl at his feet . . . .

For further references, see: COFFIN 74; GRIEG 85; GUIDE 85.



1) The brown girl has got houses and lands,
Fair Ellen she hasn't got none;
And if you would take your mother's advice,
You would bring the brown girl home.

2) He dressed himself in scarlet red
All mounted o'er wi' green,
And every town that he rode through
They thought he was some king.

3) When he came to Fair Ellen's gates,
How loudly he rang the bell;
There were none so ready as Fair Ellen
To welcome Lord Thomas in.

4) "What news, what news, Lord Thomas?" she cried.
"What news have you brought unto me?"
"I've come to bid you to my wedding,
And that's sad news to thee."

5) *"Forbid, forbid, Lord Thomas," she cried,*
"Forbid it not unto me,
For I thought you the jolly bridegroom
And I the bride to be."

6) *"Come ritle me, title me, mother," she cried,*
"Come ritle me all into one.
Will I go to Lord Thomas' wedding,
Or will I stay at home?"

7) *"Many one's been your friend, Fair Ellen,*
And many one's been your foe;
But if you take your mother's advice,
To Lord Thomas' wedding don't go."

8) *When she came to Lord Thomas' gates*
How loudly she rang the bell;
There were none so ready as Lord Thomas
To welcome Fair Ellen in.

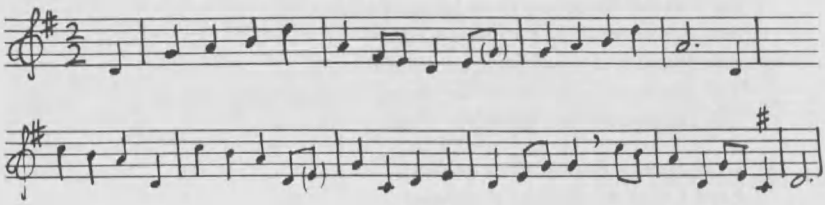
9) "Is this your bride Lord Thomas?" she cried,
"Is this your bride?" cried she.
"For I thought you the jolly bridegroom,
And I the bride to be."

10) "Despise her not, Fair Ellen," he cried,
"Despise her not unto me.
I wouldn't give your little finger
For all her whole body."

5. LORD LOVELL, Child 75, sung by Mrs. Ethel Findlater, Dounby, Orkney, recorded by Peter Kennedy.

From the far north of the British Isles comes this story of love and death; another ballad universally esteemed by American folk singers and little found in Great Britain today. On the whole Americans have preferred ballads of ill-fated love, and Britons, ballads of illicit and erotic love. The popularity of **Lord Lovell** in America is in part due to its appearance in numerous song-

sters. In fact, the tune was often used for parodies and the ballad was frequently burlesqued around the time of the Civil War. Arthur K. Davis surmises that the tendency to make fun of this ballad was due to the fact that its tune is too light for this tragic theme. For further references, see: Barry, *British Ballads From Maine,* New Haven, 1929; COFFIN, 78; GUIDE 85.



1) Lord Lovel he stood at his castle gate
A-combing his milk white steed,
When down came Lady Love Nancy Bell
To wish her lover good speed, speed, speed,
To wish her lover good speed.

2) *"O where are you going, Lord Lovel?" she says,*
"O where are you going?" says she.
"I'm going, my Lady Love Nancy Bell,
Strange countries for to see, see, see,
Strange countries for to see."

3) *"When will you be back, Lord Lovel?" she says,*
"When will you be back?" says she.
"A year or two or three at the furthest,
I'll be back to my Lady Nancy, Nancy,
I'll be back to my Lady Nancy."

4) He had not been twelve months and a day
Strange countries for to see,
When languishing thoughts came into his mind,
His Lady Nancy to go see, see, see,
His Lady Nancy to go see.

5) He rode and he rode on his milk-white steed
Till he came to London Town;
And there he heard the church-bells ringing,
And the people all mourning around, around,
And the people all mourning around.

6) "O what is the matter?" Lord Lovel he says,
"O what is the matter?" says he;
And a voice makes answer, "A lady has died,
And they call her Lady Nancy, Nancy,
And they call her Lady Nancy."

7) *He ordered her grave to be opened wide,*
And her shrouds to be thrown aside;
And there he kissed her clay cold lips
Till the tears came trinkling down, down, down,
Till the tears came trinkling down.

8) *Lady Nancy Bell died as today,*
Lord Lovel he died as tomorrow;
Lady Nancy Bell was laid in the cold churchyard,
Lord Lovel was laid in a shire, -ire, -ire,
Lord Lovel was laid in a shire.

9) Lady Nancy Belle was laid in a cold churchyard,
Lord Lovel was laid in a shire;
And out of her bosom grew a red, red rose,
And out of her lover's a briar, -iar, -iar,
And out of her lover's a briar.

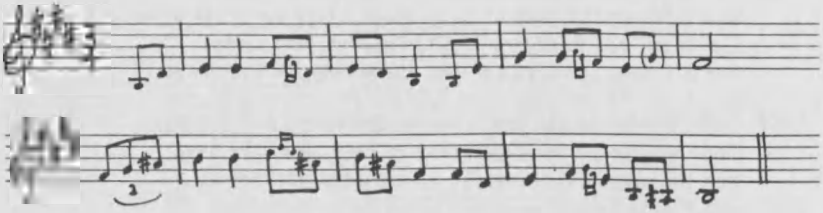
10) They grew and they grew to the old church spire,
Where they could grow no higher;
And there they entwined in a true-lover's knot,
All true-lovers for to admire, -ire, -ire,
All true-lovers for to admire.

6. LORD GREGORY, Child 76, sung by Elizabeth Cronin, Macroom, County Cork, Ireland, recorded by Alan Lomax.

To my mind this is one of the finest performances of a traditional ballad on record. Mrs. Cronin was old and feeble when I met her – indeed, I had to hold the microphone close to her lips to register her voice – but her sensitive and graceful matching of verse and melody throughout is a model for modern singers. The ballad itself has been rarely found by modern collectors in such a complete form, although the full story was once widely popular. Child prints eleven long versions. The present form omits to explain that the **Lass Of Roch Royal,** bearing his illegitimate child in her arms, comes to Gregory's castle to ask for her lover's help. Mrs. Cronin begins with the conversation between the girl and Gregory's mother. In fact, she dwells so much upon this passage that the ballad is turned half way into a lyric.

Lord Gregory has been often reported in America, but rarely more than the "who will shoe my feet" stanzas occur, sometimes as a lyric song or embedded

in other folk pieces. Perhaps this is an example of a ballad dwindling away to a fragment. On the other hand, it seems more likely that this stanza series has wandered into many songs. For further references, see: DAVIS, (op cit) for a version of 29 stanzas; COFFIN 79; KEITH 59.



1) I am a king's daughter that's straight from Cappoquin,
In search of Lord Gregory, may God I find him.
The rain beats at my yellow locks and the dew wets me still,
Me babe is cold in my arms, Lord Gregory, let me in.

2) Lord Gregory he's not here and henceforth can't be seen,
He is gone to Bonnie Scotland to bring home his new Queen;
Leave now those windows and likewise this hall,
For it's deep in the sea you should hide your downfall.

3) Who will shoe my babe's little feet, who will put gloves on her hands,
And who'll tie my babe's middle with a long and green band?
Who will comb my babe's yellow locks with an ivory comb,
And who'll be my babe's father till Lord Gregory comes home?

4) *I'll shoe your babe's little feet, I'll put gloves on her hands,*
And I'll tie your babe's middle with a long and green band.
I'll comb your babe's yellow locks with an ivory comb,
And I'll be your babe's father till Lord Gregory comes home.

5) Do you remember, Lord Gregory, that night in Cappoquin,
When we both changed pocket handkerchiefs, and that against my will;
For yours was pure linen, love, and mine was coarse cloth,
Yours cost one guinea, love, and mine but one groat.

6) *Leave now those windows and likewise this hall,*
For it's deep in the sea you should hide your downfall.

7) *Do you remember, darling Gregory, that night in Cappoquin*
When we both changed rings on our fingers, and I against my will?
For yours was pure silver, love, and mine was black tin,
Yours cost one guinea, love, and mine but one cent.

8) *Leave now those windows and likewise this hall,*
For it's deep in the sea you should hide your downfall.

9) My curse on you, mother, and my curse it being sore,
Sure I dreamt the lass of Arms came a-rapping to my door;
Lie down, you foolish son, and lie down and sleep,
For it's long ago a weary lass sat wailing in the deep.

10) Come saddle me the black horse, the brown and the grey,
Come saddle me the best horse in my stable this day,
And I'll range over valleys, o'er mountains so wide,
And I'll find the lass of Arms and lie by her side.

7. BARBARA ALLEN, Child 84, told in six fragments by: **A,** Jessie Murray, Buchan, Scotland, recorded by Alan Lomax; **B,** Fred Jordon, Shropshire, England, recorded by Peter Kennedy; **C,** Charlie Wills; **D,** Mary Bennell, Dorset, England, recorded by Peter Kennedy; **E,** Thomas Moran, Leitrim, Ireland, recorded by Seamus Ennis; **F,** Phil Tanner, Gower, Wales. Full texts not printed.

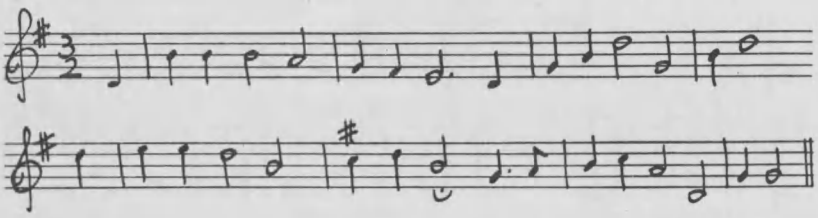
Samuel Pepys wrote of his delight in hearing an actress sing this ballad. Goldsmith was moved to tears when an old dairymaid sang it for him. Generations of Britons, and especially Americans, apparently agreed with a mountaineer friend of mine who said that "It made the ha'r rise on my head to hear it sung." **Barbara Allen** has been for a long time the most popular of traditional ballads in English, excepting always **Frog Went A-Courting.** Three points are striking in its history: 1) It has no European analogues, though the same theme occurs in Spain and Serbia; 2) The story is remarkably consistent in almost all versions; 3) American versions are more common and more complex.

One might fairly conclude, if popular ballads deal with important psychological patterns, that **Barbara Allen** contains a theme central to the emotional life of Great Britain and, even more, America. The story could not be simpler. A young man is dying of love. He calls for his girl and asks forgiveness and mercy. She scorns and leaves him and he dies. When she hears of his death, she dies of remorse – and in America, so does her mother. It seems to me that the most obvious interpretation here is the most cogent: that is, the revenge and subsequent guilt of a proud and probably frigid, or injured, woman, which would be felt in different ways by male and female listeners. This explanation fits the history of the sexual pattern in recent times in the English speaking world.

Robert Graves proposes an idea which may account for the origin of the song. He sees Barbara Allen as a witch who is killing a man by magic. He begs for mercy, but she persists in her cruelty and then, as often transpires in witch tales, is killed by her own wickedness. In this version, the offer of gifts to Barbara and the lines from Ireland that have her laughing when she

sees the corpse suggest that Graves may be right. For further references see: B. A. Botkin, *American Play Party Songs* (for use as game song); COFFIN, 87; GRIEG, 67; GUIDE, 51; ORD, 476.

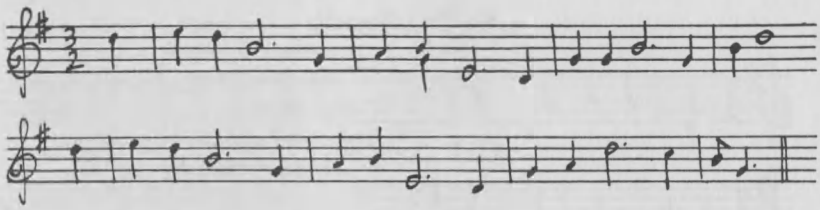
A. Jessie Murray



1) In Scotland I was born and bred,
In Scotland I was dwelling;
I fell in love with a pretty fair maid,
And her name was Barbara Allen.

2) I courted her for seven long years
Till I could court no longer;
I fell sick and very sick,
And I sent for Barbara Allen.

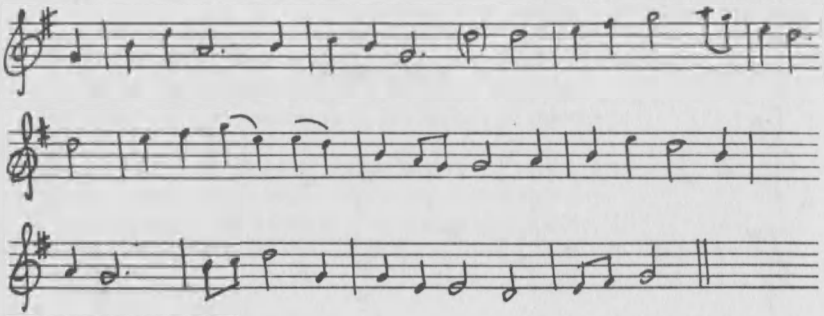
B. Fred Jordan



3) It was one day in the month of May
When the flowers they were bloomin',
And Johnny on his sick-bed lay
For the sake of Barbara Allen.

4) And slowly, slowly she came up,
And slowly she came nigh him;
And all she said when there she came,
"Young man, I think you're dyin'."

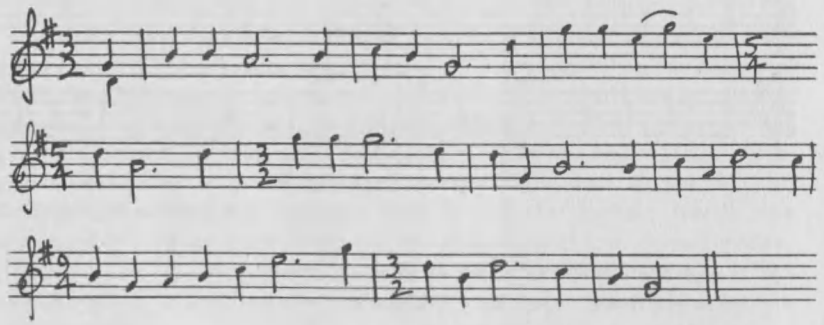
C. Charlie Wills



5) "A dying man, don't say I am
When one kiss from you will cure me."
"One kiss from me you never shall have
While your poor heart lie breaking, breaking,
While your false heart lie a-breaking.

6) Last Saturday night you know very well,
Sweet ale that you were drinking;
You drink your 'ealth to all was there,
But not to Barbara Allen, Allen,
But not to Barbara Allen."

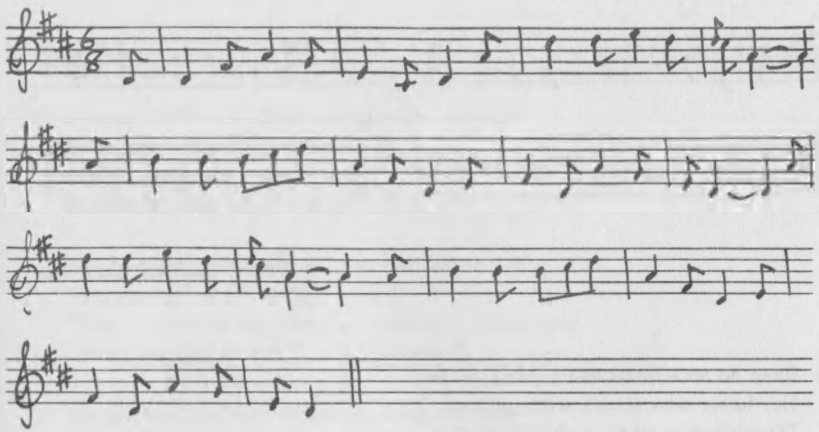
D. Mary Bennell



7) O mother dear, by my bedside
You'll see a basin standing;
With all the tears that I have shed,
Give them to Barbara Allen, Allen, Allen,
Give them to Barbara Allen.

8) O mother dear, by my bedside
You'll see a waistcoat hanging,
With my gold watch and my gold chain,
Give them to Barbara Allen, Allen, Allen,
Give them to Barbara Allen.

E. Thomas Moran



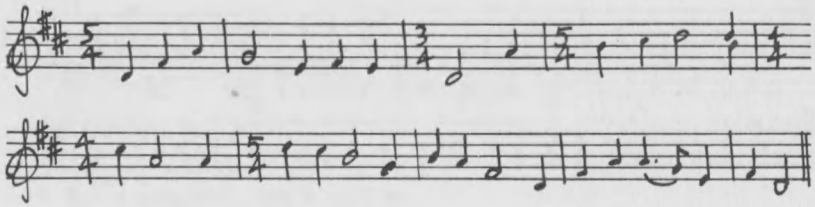
9) He turned his face unto the wall
In the bed where he was lying;
He bid adieu to the ladies all,
And woe false Mary Ellen,
And woe false Mary Ellen,
He bid adieu to the ladies all,
And woe false Mary Ellen.

10) As she was standing in her father's door,
She heard the death bell tolling;
And every toll that death bell give,
"Hard-hearted Mary Ellen,
Hard-hearted Mary Ellen,"
And every toll that death bell give,
"Hard hearted Mary Ellen."

11) As she looked over her right shoulder
She saw the funeral coming.
"Layve down, layve down his corpse," she said,
"Until I gaze upon him,".
Etc. . .

12) The more she gazed, the more she laughed,
The more she slighted on him.
Until her friends cried out, "For shame
Hard-hearted Mary Ellen."

F. Phil Tanner



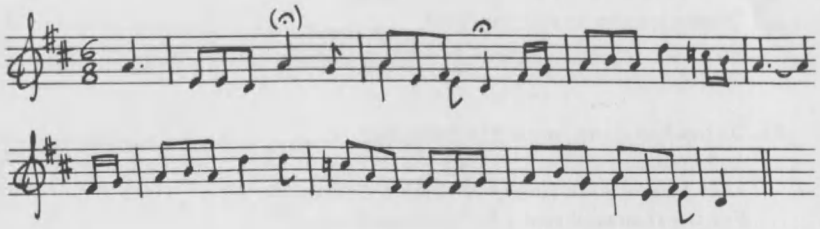
13) When he was dead and laid in grave,
Her heart was struck with sorrow,
"O mother, mother, make my bed,
For I shall die tomorrow."

14) She on her death bed as she lay
Begged to be buried by him;
And so repented of that day
That she did e'er deny him.

15) "Farewell," she cried, "Ye virgins all,
And shun the fault I fell in.
Henceforth take warning by the fate
Of cruel Barbara Allen."

8. GEORGE COLLINS, Child 85, sung by Enos White, Axford, Hampshire, England, recorded by Bob Copper, BBC Sound Archive.

Scholars conjecture that this ancient theme is linked with **Clerk Colvill,** Child 42, and contains traces of fairy or mermaid lore. A young man encounters his supernatural mistress washing at the ford or at the foot of a fairy hill, and she threatens him with death if he deserts her. When he falls ill and dies, he asks to be buried at the foot of the fairy hill. For references see JAFL LVIII, 73, and LX, 265; JFSS, IV, 106; COFFIN, 90; `E, 58.



1) George Collins walked out one May mornin'
When May was all in bloom;
And there he saw a fair pretty maid
A-washing her white marble stone.

2) She hooped, she holloed, she call-ed so loud,
She waved her lily-white 'and;
"Come hither to me, George Collins," cried she,
"For your life it won't last you long."

3) He put his ben'-bow down on the bank-side
And across the river 'e sprung;
'E clips 'is arms round her middle so small,
And he kiss-ed her red rosy cheeks.

4) *George Collins rode home to his father's own house*
And he knock-ed at the ring;
"Arise, arise, dear father," he cried,
"Arise and let me in."

5) *"Arise, arise, dear mother," he cried,*
"Arise and shake up my bed.
Arise, arise, dear sister," he cried,
"Get a napkin to tie round my head.

6) *"For if I should die this night,*
Which I suppose I shall,
You bury me under that white marble stone
That leads from Fair Ellender's 'ome."

7) Fair Ellender sit in her hall one day
A-weaving her silk so fine,
She saw the finest corpse a-comin'
That ever her eyes shone on.

8) Fair Ellender said unto her 'ead-maid,
"Whose corpse is this so fine?"
She made a reply, "George Collins's corpse,
An old true-lover of thine."

9) "O put him down, my little brave boy,
And open his coffin so wide;
That I might kiss George Collins's cheeks,
For ten thousand times he 'as kissed mine."

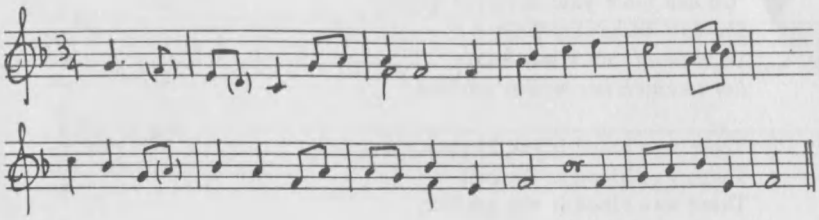
10) This news being carried to fair London town,
And wrote on London gates;
Those six pretty maids died all in one night,
'Twas all for George Collins's sake.

9. CRUEL LINCOLN, Child 93, sung by Ben Butcher, Popham, Hampshire, England, recorded by Bob Copper, BBC Sound Archive.

As Child prints it, Lamkin, a mason, has built a castle for a lord who then refuses to pay him. He takes his revenge by breaking into the castle one night when the lord was from home. He cruelly tortures the baby until it cries out and the lady comes down from her tower. He murders the lady, and then is burned at the stake for his crime.

This bloody fancy, only partly reproduced here, but common enough in the American backwoods, has been variously explained by scholars. Phillips Barry recalls the Irish lepers' belief that they could be cured by the blood of an innocent person caught in a silver bowl and points out that in Irish lepers were called "white men" or *Linfinn,* close to *Lamkin. . .* Others have identified *Lamkin* as a form of the Flemish *Lambert.* Flemish masons were well known in Great Britain in the Middle Ages. Human sacrifices were once offered to make buildings strong, and this survived in the belief that masons mixed blood in their cement to make it strong. . .

Either one of these ingenious explanations may illumine the origin of the ballad, yet they have little to say about the fascination it has exercised on the imagination of the folk. In fantasy the commons take terrible revenge on the aristocrat. Mothers worry about entrusting their children to nurses who may let in murderous men from the dark. Rejected men fantasy revenge on the women who have rejected them and marry their rivals. Probably a number of such themes have run through this gory tale. For further reference see: JAFL, LII, 74; COFFIN, 94; GRIEG, 71; GUIDE, 71.



1) *Says the Lord to the Lady,*
"I am now going out.
Beware of Cruel Lincoln
Whilst I am gone out."

2) "What cares I for Lincoln
Or any of his kin!
My doors are all bolted,
My windows are pinned."

3) As soon as the Lord
Had got out of sight,
Cruel Lincoln crept in
At the middle of the night.

4) Got and pinched my sweet baby,
Which caused it to cry;
Whilst nurse sat a-singing
O hush-a-lullie-bye.

5) *"O nurse, o nurse,*
How sound you do sleep,
Whilst my little baby
Most bitterly does weep."

6) *"O lady, dear lady,*
Come and take it in your lap,
For I cannot quiet it
With milk nor with pap."

7) *The lady came down,*
Not thinking any harm;
Cruel Lincoln stood a-waiting
For to catch her in his arms.

8) *"O Lincoln, Cruel Lincoln,*
Spare me life for one hour,
You shall have my daughter Betsy,
Who is thy blood's flower."

9) *"Go and fetch your daughter Betsy,*
She will know very well
To hold up this silver basin
For to catch her mother's blood."

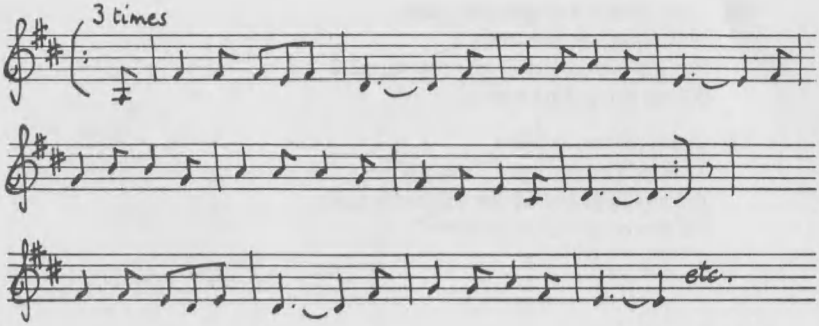
10) There was blood in the kitchen,
There was blood in the 'all,
There was blood in the parlour,
Where the lady did fall.

11) *As soon as the Lord*
Had heard what was done;
Tears from his eyes
Gently flowed.

12) Saying, "The nurse shall be 'anged
On the gallows so 'igh;
Cruel Lincoln shall be burned
In the fires close by."

10. THE PRICKELLY BUSH (The Maid Saved from the Gallows), Child 95, sung by Julia Scaddon, Chidcock, Dorset, England, recorded by Peter Kennedy.

In the many forms found all over Europe, the victim, usually a girl, has been captured by corsairs or pirates. In English versions, where her crime is mentioned, it is usually the theft of a golden ball, key, or ring (usual sex symbols). In the West Indian cante-fable, a cruel mistress slips the object into the serving-maid's pocket and then accuses her of the theft. Southern Negroes have made this story into a folk play, and in Ireland it turns up in a secondary form as **The Streets Of Derry,** a ballad of the uprising of 1798. This ubiquituous theme also occurs as lyric song, children's game, play party rhyme and Negro ballad (Leadbelly's **Gallis Pole.**) In one old English version the father says he would give five hundred pounds to see his daughter hung, but usually the members of her family are simply powerless or passive until the girl is at last rescued by her sweetheart. The basic content, it seems to me, is the feeling of antogonism towards the family and of sexual guilt so common among adolescent girls, which parents and siblings are powerless to allay. For further references see: Reed Smith, *South Carolina Ballads,* 1928, Chap. VIII, for a long discussion and many variant forms; KITTREDGE (op cit), xi ff.; ERICH POHL, Folklore Fellows Communications, No. 105, p. 1-265; COFFIN, 96; GUIDE, 86.



1) O 'angman 'old my hand,
And 'old it for a while,
I think I see my own mother dear
Comin' over the yonder stile.

2) O 'ave you brought me gold?
Or can you set me free?
Or are you come to see me 'ang
All on the gallows tree?

3) No, I've not brought you gold,
Nor I can't set you free,
For I'm not come to see you 'ang
All on the gallows tree.

4) O the prickelly bush
That pricks my heart from sore;
If I ever get out of the prickelly bush
I'll never get in it no more.

5–8 *Father . . .*

9–12 *Brother . .*

13–16 *Sister . . .*

17) O 'angman 'old my hand,
And 'old it for a while;
I think I see my own sweetheart
Comin' over the yonder stile.

18) O 'ave you brought me gold?
Or can you set me free?
Or are you come to see me 'ang
All on the gallows tree?

19) Yes, I have brought you gold,
And I can set you free,
But I'm not come to see you hanged
All on the gallows tree.

20) O the prickelly bush
That pricks my heart from sore;
If I ever get out of the prickelly bush
I'll never get in it no more."