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FOLK MUSIC OF THE UNITED STATES

Issued from the Collections of the Archive of Folk Song

Long-Playing Record L58

CHILD BALLADS TRADITIONAL IN THE UNITED STATES

Edited by

Bertrand H. Bronson

Preface

All the songs on this and the preceding long-playing record (L57) are members, circulating within recent decades in various parts of the United States, of the classic and authoritative canon of traditional narrative songs of English and Scottish growth now universally known as the "Child Ballads," after the great nineteenth-century scholar who first assembled and edited them: Professor Francis James Child of Harvard University. Child had a vast and historic knowledge of balladry, defying barriers of language and ranging familiarly through the centuries. After the most strenuous efforts, prolonged for decades, to recover every record of value, he concluded that only a handful were still traditionally alive. What would have been his delighted amazement to learn -- a fact that has been discovered only in our own century and which is spectacularly demonstrated in the Archive of Folk Song -- that scores of his chosen ballads are even today being sung in strictly traditional forms, not learned from print, across the length and breadth of this country, in variants literally innumerable! The aim of the present selection is to display some of the Archive's riches, a representative cross-section from the hundred of Child variants collected by many interested field workers and now safely garnered in the Library of Congress.

References for Study: Professor Child set forth his ballad canon in the monumental English and Scottish Popular Ballads (Boston, Houghton, Mifflin, 1882-1898, 10 parts in 5 volumes; reprinted in 3 volumes, New York, Folklore Press, 1956). Mention should also be made of the useful one-volume abridgement of the complete work, the "Student's Cambridge Edition," prepared by Helen Child Sargent and George Lyman Kittredge (Boston, Houghton, Mifflin, 1904).

The music of the ballads, a subject receiving scant attention in Child's time, was first extensively collected and published by the British scholar, Cecil J. Sharp, whose English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians (London, Oxford, 1932, 2 volumes; reprinted 1952) contains more than 350 American tunes for 45 of the Child ballads. A full compendium of the extant melodies, B.H. Bronson's The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads with Their Texts (Princeton), is currently in preparation. The first volume, printing close to 1,000 tunes for ballads 1-53, was published in 1959.

The number of important books and articles on traditional balladry, particularly the Child ballads, is much more extensive than can be suggested here. An effective key to much of it, however, is the "Critical, Bibliographical Study of the Traditional Ballads of America," which forms the major part of Tristram P. Coffin's book, The British Ballad in North America (Philadelphia, American Folklore Society, 1950).

For those interested in reading more about Child's life and lifework, the eighth chapter of Sigurd Hustvedt's Ballad Books and Ballad Men (Cambridge, Harvard, 1930) is heartily recommended.

THE WIFE OF USHER'S WELL  
(Child No. 79)

A1

[(b) "The Three Babes." Sung by Mrs. Texas Gladden at Salem, Virginia, 1941. Recorded by Alan Lomax.]

This version of "The Wife of Usher's Well" differs in some particulars from the most famous Scottish forms: the knight is an unnecessary intruder, who does nothing useful yet robs the lady of some of her former pathos. Additional pathos should accrue by the reduction of "stout and stalwart sons" to "little babes" -- but this change, although perhaps universal in America, is surely wrong, as the conduct and speech of the children shows. In some versions, "cold Christmas" is, rather, "old Christmas," which recalls to memory the shift in the English calendar in 1752, when those unwilling to capitulate celebrated "old Christmas" on January 6 rather than on the day which was, they thought, only by fraud called December 25. The k-sound in "dark" may have been carried over to the next word in Mrs. Gladden's version. Also, the "winding sheet" in stanza 4 seems to have come forward from the last stanza, to the detriment of the sense. Contrary to the versions known to Child, this one in its final statement carries the positive suggestion that the sons come back to forbid obstinate grief. Doubtless, in our up-to-date psychology, this would be explained as a mechanism designed to rid the mother of her feelings of guilt for allowing her grief to cool.

The tunes of this ballad are generally speaking some of the most consistent and beautiful that tradition has kept alive.

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1. There was a knight and a lady bright  
And three little babes had she  
She sent them away to a far countr-ee  
To learn their grammary.
2. They hadn't been gone but a very short time  
About three months and a day  
Till the Lord called over this whole wide world  
And taken those babes away.
3. It was on a dark, cold Christmas night  
When everything was still  
She saw her three little babes come running  
Come running down the hill.

4. She spread a table of bread and wine  
That they might drink and eat  
She spread a bed, a winding sheet  
That they might sleep so sweet.
5. Take it off, take it off, said the oldest one,  
Take it off, take it off, said (he)  
I can't stay here in this wide wicked world  
For there's a better one for me.
6. Cold clods, cold clods down by my side,  
Cold clods down at my feet  
The tears my dear mother has shed for me  
Would wet my winding sheet.

SIR ANDREW BARTON and HENRY MARTYN  
(Child Nos. 167 & 250)

A2

[(a) "Andrew Batann." Sung by Warde H. Ford at Central Valley, California, 1938. Recorded by Sidney Robertson Cowell.]

Not much of actual history remains in this spirited amalgamation of "Sir Andrew Barton" and "Henry Martin." Originally, Henry VIII's noble captains, Sir Thomas and Sir Edward Howard, captured the Scottish marauder, Sir Andrew Barton, after strenuous fighting. Charles Stewart seems to have been borrowed, to his own discomfiture, from naval service in Lake Erie, in the War of 1812. The eleventh and thirteenth stanzas appear to have been taken over from another naval contest as commemorated in "Captain Ward and the Rainbow" (Child No. 287), along with the iniquitous victory of the pirate.

- - -

1. There once were three brothers from merry Scotland  
From merry Scotland were they  
They cast a lot to see which of them  
Would go robbing all o'er the salt sea.
2. The lot it fell to Andrew Batann  
The youngest one of the three  
That he should go robbing all o'er the salt sea  
To maintain his three brothers and he.
3. He had not sailed but one summer's eve  
When a light it did appear  
It sailed far off and it sailed far on  
And at last it came sailing so near.

4. Who art, who art, cried Andrew Batann  
Who art that sails so nigh  
We are the rich merchants from old Eng-1-and  
And I pray you will let us pass by.
5. O no, o no, cried Andrew Batann,  
O no, that never can be  
Your ship and your cargo I'll take them away  
And your merry men drown in the sea.
6. When the news reached old Eng-1-and  
What Andrew Batann had done  
Their ship and their cargo he'd taken away  
And all of their merry men drowned.
7. Build me a boat, cried Captain Charles Stuart  
And build it strong and secure  
And if I don't capture Andrew Batann  
My life I'll no longer endure.
8. He had not sailed but one summer's eve  
When a light it did appear  
It sailed far off and it sailed far on  
And at last it came sailing so near.
9. Who art, who art, cried Captain Charles Stuart,  
Who art that sails so nigh?  
We're the jolly Scots robbers from merry Scotland  
And I pray you will let us pass by.
10. O no, o no, cried Captain Charles Stuart,  
O no, that never can be  
Your ship and your cargo I'll take it away  
And your merry men drown in the sea.
11. What ho, what ho, cried Andrew Batann  
I value you not one pin  
For while you show me fine brass without  
I'll show you good steel within.
12. Then broadside to broadside these ships they stood  
And like thunder their cannon did roar  
They had not fought but two hours or so  
Till Captain Charles Stuart gave o'er.
13. Go home, go home, cried Andrew Batann  
And tell your king for me  
While he remains king upon the dry land  
I'll remain king of the sea.

LORD DERWENTWATER  
(Child No. 208)

A3

[(a) "The King's Love-Letter." Sung by Mrs. G.A. Griffin at Newberry, Florida, 1937. Recorded by John A. Lomax.]

This is an extraordinary survival indeed! What's the Jacobite Rising of 1715 to Florida, or Lord Derwentwater to Mrs. Griffin, that she should lament for him? The narrative behind this disordered and confusing text is as follows: Derwentwater, a Scottish Earl who rose to support his companion in France, James Stewart, the Old Pretender, against the House of Hanover and George I, was captured at the Battle of Preston (November 14, 1715), was attainted and brought to the block, February 24, 1716. His youth -- he was only 27 -- and his open bearing excited popular sympathy for his fate. The ballad describes the summons to London for trial and the Earl's premonitions of doom. In earlier versions, he leaves houses and land to his eldest son, £10,000 to his second son, and a third of his estate to his lady, who is in child-bed when he departs. Probably "It's two and two" is a corruption of "to you and to you." On the way, his horse stumbles, and his nose begins to bleed -- two bad omens. The "jolly old man" who commands his life is properly the headsman with a "braid axe." The Earl deals money to the poor, in a final generous gesture, and his velvet coat as a fee to the executioner. His only treason, he says, was the keeping of 500 (or 5000) men to fight for King James, his rightful sovereign.

Professor Alton Morris, who brought Mrs. Griffin's large repertoire to the attention of the Archive of Folk Song, recounts her singing of this rare fragment in the Journal of American Folklore (vol. XLVII, 1934, pp. 95-96) and on pages 308-310 of his Folksongs of Florida (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1950).

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1. The king he wrote a love letter  
And he sealed it all with gold  
And he sent it to the Duke of Melanto (r)  
To read it if he could.
2. The first few lines that he did read  
It caused him for to smile  
But the next few lines that he did read  
The tears from his eyes did flow.

3. He called up his oldest one  
To bridle and saddle my steed  
For I've got to go to Lunnon Town  
Although I have no need.
4. It's make your will, you Duke of Melanto (r)  
It's make your will all around  
It's two and two to my two oldest sons  
It's two, it's two all around  
For all of my steeds and the rest of my property  
We'll retain to her lady's side.
5. Before he rode up in the edge of town  
He met a jolly old man  
Your life, your life, you Duke of Melanto (r)  
Your life I will command.
6. He stooped over the window  
There the flowers swelled so gay  
Till his nose gushed out and bleed  
Come all you lords, you pretty lords, ye,  
Be kind to my baby  
Come all you lords, you pretty lords, ye,  
Be kind to my baby  
For all my steeds and the rest of my property  
We'll retain to her lady's side.

JAMES HARRIS or THE DAEMON LOVER  
(Child No. 243)

A4

[(c) "Well Met, My Old True Love." Sung by Mrs. Pearl Jacobs Borusky at Antigo, Wisconsin, 1940. Recorded by Robert F. Draves.]

Mrs. Borusky's version, brought from the Appalachians, tells a connected story that is in no need of explanation, having its counterpart in every day's newspapers. For some reason, this ballad, no longer much sung in Britain, has in America been very well-liked and frequently collected. The English broadside tradition, dating from the seventeenth century (as from Plymouth), is what has been perpetuated here, but there are much more impressive Scottish forms. Of these the most famous is called "The Daemon Lover" in Scott's Minstrelsy, wherein the seducer turns supernatural on the voyage, with dismal countenance and "drumlie ee." After showing his cloven hoof, he strikes the topmast with his hand, the foremast with his knee, breaking the gallant ship to pieces. As the song is ordinarily sung, it is redeemed from cheapness by its fine melody.

The version of Mr. Walters, which follows, has unusual touches. There is a suggestion of magic in the splendor of the ship and the sweet music; just as in the earlier copies "the sails were o the taffetie, the masts o the beaten gold," and the ship was run by no visible human agency.

- - -

1. Well met, well met, my old true love  
Well met, well met, said he  
I have just returned from the salt, salt sea  
And it's all for the sake of thee  
And it's all for the sake of thee.
2. I once could have married a king's daughter fair  
And she would have married me  
But I refused that rich crown of gold  
And it's all for the sake of thee.  
And it's all for the sake of thee.
3. If you could have married a king's daughter fair  
I'm sure you are much to blame  
For I am married to a house carpenter  
And I think he's a fine young man.  
And I think he's a fine young man.
4. If you'll forsake your house carpenter  
And go along with me  
I will take you where the grass grows green  
On the banks of the sweet Willie.  
On the banks of the sweet Willie.
5. If I forsake my house carpenter  
And go along with thee  
What have you got for my support  
And to keep me from slavery?  
And to keep me from slavery?
6. I have six ships upon the sea  
And the seventh one at land  
And if you come and go with me  
They shall be at your command.  
They shall be at your command.
7. She took her babe into her arms  
And gave it kisses three  
Saying, stay at home my pretty little babe  
To keep your father company.  
To keep your father company.

8. She dressed herself in rich array  
To exceed all others in the town  
And as she walked the streets around  
She shone like a glittering crown.  
She shone like a glittering crown.
9. They had not been on board more than two weeks  
I'm sure it was not three  
Until one day she began to weep  
And she wept most bitterly.  
And she wept most bitterly.
10. O are you weeping for your houses or your land  
Or are you weeping for your store  
Or are you weeping for your house carpenter  
You never shall see any more  
That you never shall see any more
11. I'm not weeping for my houses or my land  
Nor I'm not weeping for my store  
But I am weeping for my pretty little babe  
I never shall see any more  
I never shall see any more.
12. They had not been on board more than three weeks  
It was not four, I am sure  
Until at length the ship sprung a leak  
And she sunk to arise no more.  
And she sunk to arise no more.
13. A curse, a curse to all seamen  
And a curse to a sailor's wife  
For they have robbed me of my house carpenter  
And have taken away my life  
And have taken away my life.

A5

[(e) "The Ship Carpenter." Sung by Mr. Clay Walters at Salyersville, Kentucky, 1937. Recorded by Alan and Elizabeth Lomax.]

See the preceeding note, A4.

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1. Well met, well met, my own true love  
Long I've been searching for thee  
I've been all across the salt roaring sea  
And it's all for the sake of thee.

2. Oh, I could have married the king's daughter fair  
She all the same would have had me  
But I refused that rich crown of gold  
And it's all for the sake of thee.
3. If you could have married the king's daughter dear  
I'm sure that you are to blame  
For I wouldn't have my husband to hear tell of thee  
For ten thousand pounds of gold.
4. Oh, I am married to a ship carpenter  
And a ship carpenter I obey  
And by him I have a little son  
Or I would go along with thee.
5. What have you to maintain me on  
Is it houses, land, gold, and fee  
I've seven loaded ships a-sailing on the sea  
Besides the one that brought me to land.
6. She picked up her baby all in her arms  
And kissed it sweetlie embraced  
And laid it down on a soft bed of down  
And bid it to go to sleep.
7. As they walked down by the seashore  
The water is set running so bold  
The sides was lined with silver so bright  
And the top was the purest of gold.
8. As they sailed all on the sea  
The music did seem so sweet  
She thought of her babe she had left behind  
And set herself down to weep.
9. Are you weeping for my gold, said he?  
Are you weeping for fee?  
Or are you weeping for some other man  
That you love far better than me?
10. I'm not a-weeping for your gold  
Neither am I a-weeping for fee  
But I'm weeping to return to dry land again  
My poor little babe to see.
11. If you had ten thousand pounds of gold  
And would give it all unto me  
You never should return to dry land again  
Your babe you never will see.

12. What hills, what hills, my own true love,  
That look so white like snow?  
It's the hills of Heaven, my own true love  
Where all righteous people go.
13. What hills, what hills, my own true love,  
That look so dark and low?  
It's the hills of Hell, my own true love,  
Where you and I must go.
14. Straight news, straight news to the ship carpenter  
Straight news come back to the land  
The ship that his own dear wife sailed in  
Went sinking to the sand.
15. Sailors may be the worst of men  
That lead poor women astray  
The sailor has ruined the ship carpenter  
By deluding his poor wife away.

THE SUFFOLK MIRACLE  
(Child No. 272)

B1

[(a) "There Was an Old and Wealthy Man." Sung by Mr. Dol Small at Nellysford, Virginia, 1950. Recorded by Maud Karpeles and Sidney Robertson Cowell]

Mr. Small was one of the singers discovered by Cecil J. Sharp and Maud Karpeles in their epoch-making tours of the Appalachians during the years 1916-18. The present song was sung to them at Nellysford, Virginia, on May 22, 1918, and that version, as printed in Sharp's English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians, Vol. I, pp. 264-5, shows only slight variation from the present rendition.

Small's version of the song does not make it clear in stanza 3 that the lover's heart is literally, not figuratively, broken, so that he dies. Knowledge of this fact is necessary for proper appreciation of the ominous night-ride, which according to tradition is performed with miraculous speed. The edifying conclusion -- rather undependable, we may fear, for use in a stable society -- is of course more characteristic of the broadside habit than of true stark traditional balladry, which seldom has time to point morals.

Child's notes on this ballad reveal a surprisingly wide range of analogues in tale and song across the whole face of Europe. Bürger's famous poem, "Lenore," is based upon the theme.

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1. There were an old and wealthy man  
He had a daughter great and grand  
She were neat, handsome, and tall  
She had a handsome face withal.
2. There were many a guy there came this way  
This handsome lady for to see  
At length there were a widow's son  
'T was found he were her chosen one.
3. It was when the old folks came this to know  
They sent her two thousand miles from home  
Which broke this young man's tender heart  
To think that he and his love must part.
4. It was on the cold and stormy night  
He started for his heart's delight  
He rode till he came to the place he knew  
Says he, my love, I've come for you.
5. It's your father's request, your mother's heed  
I've come for you all in great speed  
And in two weeks or a little mo'  
I'll set you safe at your father's do'.
6. They rode till they came to the old man's gate  
He did complain his head did ache  
With a handkerchief that she had out  
With it she bound his head about.
7. They rode till they came to the old man's stile  
Says he, my love, let's tarry awhile  
Alight, alight, alight, says she,  
And I will put your steeds away.
8. She knocked upon her father's do'  
The sight of her lover she saw no mo'  
It's welcome home, my child, says he,  
What trusty friend has come for thee.
9. It's the one I love, I love so well  
I love him better than tongue can tell.  
It made the hair stand on the old man's head  
To think that he'd been twelve months dead.
10. Then princes grand and judges, too  
Summons'd for to witness this grave's undo  
It's though he had been twelve months dead  
Her handkerchief were around his head.

11. Now this is warning to young and old  
Who love their children better than gold  
If you love them, give them their way  
For fear their love may lead astray.

THE FARMER'S CURST WIFE  
(Child No. 278)

B2

[(b) "The Devil and the Farmer's Wife." Sung by Mrs. Carrie Grover of Gorham, Maine, 1941. Recorded by Alan Lomax.]

This vigorous exemplar of the Sex War seems to have an equal appeal for both women and men -- for women because it shows them equal to any occasion, and men, perhaps, because it proves they need not be ashamed of being worsted by odds which are, after all, insuperable. The moral of an Irish version, that women are worse than men because when they're sent down to Hell they get sent back again is, to borrow Feste's words, "but a cheveril glove to a good wit: how quickly the wrong side may be turned outward!"

A tale on the theme of a wife formidable to devils has traveled the wide world, from the Far East to the Far West, and from India in the South to Russia in the North. Mrs. Grover's version, with its whistling chorus, is much like a Sussex version of the mid-nineteenth century that was chosen by Child to stand at the head of his series.

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1. Oh, the Devil he came to the farmer one day  
(Whistle)  
Saying you owe me a debt and I will 'a' my pay  
To my right fol-lol-fol-laddi-i-day.
2. It is not your children or you that I crave  
(Whistle)  
But your old scolding wife and it's her I must have  
To my right fol-lol-fol-laddi-i-day.
3. Oh, take her, oh take her, with all my heart  
(Whistle)  
And I hope you and she will never part  
To my right fol-lol-fol-laddi-i-day.
4. So the Devil he mounted her onto his back  
(Whistle)  
And like a bold pedlar went carrying his pack  
To my right fol-lol-fol-laddi-i-day.

5. Nine little devils were hanging in chains  
(Whistle)  
She up with a poker and knocked out their brains,  
To my right fol-lol-fol-laddi-i-day.
6. She climbed on a stool for to make herself higher  
(Whistle)  
She threw round her left leg and knocked nine in the  
fire,  
To my right fol-lol-fol-laddi-i-day.
7. Nine little blue devils peeped over the wall  
(Whistle)  
Oh, take her back, Dad, or she'll kill us all,  
To my right fol-lol-fol-laddi-i-day.
8. So the Devil he mounted her onto his back  
(Whistle)  
And like a bold pedlar went carrying her back.  
To my right fol-lol-fol-laddi-i-day.

THE CRAFTY FARMER  
(Child No. 283)

B3

[ "The Oxford Merchant." Sung by Warde H. Ford, Central Valley, California, December 26, 1938. Recorded by Sidney Robertson Cowell. ]

The version of this ballad admitted by Child into his collection (No. 283) is prefaced in the abridged edition by a single sentence: "This very ordinary ballad has enjoyed great popularity, and is given for that reason and as a specimen of its class." There must be some special appeal in a ballad which "has enjoyed great popularity" for more than a century; and perhaps in this case it is a sort of simple childlike happiness, the quality of a story in which all turns out surprisingly well, against odds not too alarming but sufficient to elicit an anxious concern in the listener. The prosaic text, careful not to omit any useful detail, moving ahead in a straight, unhurried narrative line, always making do with the expressions nearest to hand, is supported by an utterly unpretentious tune, and admirably conveyed in the work-a-day rendition of the singer, homely, unselfconscious, and comfortable. The mellifluous and very suitable refrain is there to remind us that this is indeed a song. It is impossible to hear it through without feeling better.

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1. In Oxford there lived a merchant by trade  
He had for his servants a man and a maid  
A true Hampshire lad he had for his man  
All for to do his business, his name it was John.  
Laddy tell I day, tell I do, laddy laddy tell I day.
2. One morning quite early he called upon John  
And Johnny heard his master and quickly did run.  
"Oh take this cow and drive her to the fair  
For she's in good order and her I can spare."  
Laddy tell I day, tell I do, laddy laddy tell I day.
3. So Johnny took the cow and away he did go  
He drove her to the fair as far as I do know  
Before the day was over he sold her to a man  
Who paid him the chink which was six pounds ten.  
Laddy tell I day, tell I do, laddy laddy tell I day.
4. They went to a tavern for to get a drink  
'Twas there the tradesman laid down the chink  
Johnny turned to the lady and unto her did say  
"Oh, what shall I do with my money, I pray?"  
Laddy tell I do, tell I day, laddy laddy tell I day.
5. "Sew it up in your coat lining," the lady did say  
"For fear you will be robbed along the highway."  
The highwayman sat behind him a-drinking up his wine  
And said he to himself, "That money's all mine."  
Laddy tell I day, tell I do, laddy laddy tell I day.
6. Then Johnny took his leave and away he did go  
The highwayman followed after him as far as I do know  
He overtook the lad upon the highway  
"You're well overtaken, young man," said he.  
Laddy tell I day, tell I do, laddy laddy tell I day.
7. "Oh jump on behind me, oh jump on and ride  
How far are you going?" Little Johnny replied,  
"About twelve miles, as far as I do know;"  
And Johnny jumped a-horseback and away he did go.  
Laddy tell I day, tell I do, laddy laddy tell I day.
8. They rode along together till they came to a dark lane  
There the highwayman spoke up very plain;  
"Deliver up your money without fear or strife,  
Or in this lonesome valley you'll lose your pleasant  
life."  
Laddy tell I day, tell I do, laddy laddy tell I day.

9. So Johnny seeing there was no time for dispute  
 Came down from the horse without fear or doubt  
 From his coat lining he pulled the money out  
 And in the tall grass he strewed it well about.  
 Laddy tell I day, tell I do, laddy laddy tell I day.
10. The highwayman suddenly got down, got down from his  
 horse  
 And little did he think it was for his loss  
 For while he was picking the money that was thrown  
 Little Johnny jumped his horseback and away he did go.  
 Laddy tell I day, tell I do, laddy laddy tell I day.
11. The highwayman followed after him and bid him for to  
 stay  
 But Johnny never minded him and still rode away  
 And home to his master thus he did bring  
 Horse, saddle, and bridle and many a fine thing.  
 Laddy tell I day, tell I do, laddy laddy tell I day.
12. The servant maid seeing Little Johnny's return  
 She went and told his master as near as I can learn  
 The master came out and he looked very cross  
 And said, "Have you turned my cow into a hoss?"  
 Laddy tell I day, tell I do, laddy laddy tell I day.
13. "Oh no, dearest Master, your cow I have sold,  
 But be robbed on the highway by a highwayman bold  
 And while he was picking the money in his purse  
 All for to make amends I came off with his horse."  
 Laddy tell I day, tell I do, laddy laddy tell I day.
14. The saddle bags were opened and there as I've been told  
 Ten thousand pounds and (sic) silver and gold  
 A brace of loaded pistols. "Oh, Master, I vow,  
 I think for a boy I have well sold your cow."  
 Laddy tell I day, tell I do, laddy laddy tell I day.
15. "Oh yes, for a boy you have done quite rare;  
 Two-thirds of this money you shall have for your share  
 And as for the villain with whom you had to fight,  
 I think you've played him a true Hampshire bite."  
 Laddy tell I day, tell I do, laddy laddy tell I day.

THE SWEET TRINITY or THE GOLDEN VANITY  
 (Child No. 286)

B4

[(c) "The Golden Willow Tree." Sung by Jimmy Morris, Hazard, Kentucky, 1937. Recorded by Alan and Elizabeth Lomax.]

The home port of the victor in this chance naval encounter, by whatever name the vessel is known, is likely to change with every fresh version, though latterly at least in this country, the Turks seem to have a fairly constant claim to her opponent, and the Lowlands Low is always the scene of the engagement. There is, so far as has been determined, no historical basis for the story, which anyhow occurred too early for Russian divers to have had anything to do with the catastrophe. Sir Walter Raleigh is charged in the earliest version known (late seventeenth century) with the Captain's inexplicable treachery to his little ship-boy, so good at need with his invaluable instrument. But Raleigh's fair fame seems to have defeated these unjust aspersions in the long run, for tradition has apparently not cared to preserve them. The Turkish seamen's way of amusing themselves when not on duty ("reading checks") is a novelty in Morris's version. Earlier, they played with dice, and from that to playing checkers is no unbridgeable distance. But the checks had best have been written with a nautical pen -- a later invention than the sea-going augur.

Though both our versions come from inland sources, the song has been current mainly in the maritime states.

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1. There was a little ship in South Americ-e-e  
Cryin' O the lands that lie so low  
There was a little ship in South Americ-e-e  
That went by the name of the Weepin' Willow Tree  
And it sailed in the Lowlands so low.
2. It hadn't been a-sailing but two weeks or three  
Cryin' O the lands that lie so low  
It hadn't been a-sailing but two weeks or three  
When it was approached by a Turkish Travelee  
To sink her in the Lowlands low.
3. Captain, o captain, what will we do?  
Cryin' O the land that lies so low  
Captain, o captain, what will we do?  
If they overtake us they'll cut us in two  
They will sink us in the Lowlands so low.
4. Up stepped a little carpenter boy,  
Cryin' O the land that lies so low  
Up stepped a little carpenter boy,  
Said What will you give if the ship I'll destroy?  
I will sink'em in the Lowlands so low.

5. I'll give silver and I'll give gold,  
Cryin' O the land that lies so low  
I'll give silver and I'll give gold,  
I'll give the fairest daughter in my household  
If you'll sink 'em in the Lowlands so low.
6. He dived straight down and away swum he,  
Cryin' O the land that lies so low  
He dived straight down and away swum he,  
He swum till he come to the Turkish Travelee  
To sink her in the Lowlands low.
7. He had a little instrument suitable to his use,  
Cryin' O the land that lies so low  
He had a little instrument suitable to his use,  
He bored nine holes and in flowed the juice  
Then he sunk 'em in the Lowlands so low.
8. The men was playing cards and some was reading checks,  
Cryin' O the lands that lie so low  
Some was playing cards and some was reading checks,  
First thing they know'd they's in water to their necks  
They was sinkin' in the Lowlands low.
9. He turned back around and back swum he,  
Cryin' O the lands that lie so low  
He turned back around and back swum he,  
He swum till he come to the Weepin' Willow Tree  
Where she sailed in the Lowlands low.
10. Captain, o captain, take me on board,  
Cryin' O the lands that lie so low  
Captain, o captain, take me on board,  
And be unto me as good as your word  
I have sunk 'em in the Lowlands so low.
11. (No,) o no, I won't take you on board,  
Cryin' O the lands that lie so low  
No, o no, I won't take you on board,  
And I won't be to you as good as my word  
Though you sank 'em in the Lowlands so low.
12. If it wasn't for the love that I have for your men,  
Cryin' O the lands that lie so low  
If it wasn't for the love that I have for your men,  
I would do unto you as I done unto them  
I would sink you in the Lowlands so low.

13. (He) dived straight down and down swum he,  
Cryin' O the lands that lie so low  
He dived straight down and down swum he,  
He swum till he come to the bottom of the sea  
Sunk himself in the Lowland so low lie low  
Sunk himself in the Lowlands so low.

B5

(a) "A Ship Set Sail for North America." Sung by Mrs. Ollie Jacobs at Pearson, Wisconsin, 1941. Recorded by Robert F. Draves and Helene Stratman-Thomas.

See preceding note, B4.

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1. A ship set sail for North America  
And she went by the name of the Turkish Revelee  
As she sailed along the lonesome lowlands low  
As she sailed along the Lowland Sea.
2. There was another ship in the north countree-ee  
And she went by the name of a Golden Willow Tree  
As she sailed upon the lonesome lowlands low  
As she sailed upon the Lowland Sea.
3. Captain, o captain, what will you give me  
If I overtake her and sink her in the sea  
If I'll sink her in the lonesome lowlands low  
If I'll sink her in the Lowland Sea?
4. I have a house and I have land  
And I have a daughter that will be at your command  
If you'll sink her in the lonesome lowlands low  
If you'll sink her in the Lowland Sea.
5. I have a little tool just fitted for the use  
Boring for salt water, letting in the sluice  
As she sails upon the lonesome lowlands low  
As she sails upon the Lowland Sea.
6. He fell upon his back and away swam he  
Until he overtaken the Golden Willow Tree  
As she sailed along the lonesome lowlands low  
As she sailed along the Lowland Sea.
7. Some with their hats and some with their caps  
Trying to stop the salt water gaps  
As she sailed along the lonesome lowlands low  
As she sailed along the Lowland Sea.

8. He fell upon his back and away swam he  
Until he overtaken the Turkish Revelee  
As she sailed along the lonesome lowlands low  
As she sailed along the Lowland Sea.
9. Captain, o captain, take me on board  
And be to me as good as your word  
For I've sunk her in the lonesome lowlands low  
For I've sunk her in the lowlands low.
10. Neither will I take you on board  
Or be to you as good as my word  
Though you've sunk her in the lonesome lowlands low  
Though you've sunk her in the Lowland Sea.
11. If it wasn't for the love I have for your men  
I would serve you as I have served them  
I would sink you in the lonesome lowlands low  
I would sink you in the Lowland Sea.

THE MERMAID  
(Child No. 289)

B6

[(b) Sung by Mrs. Emma Dusenbury near Mena, Arkansas, 1936.  
Recorded by Sidney Robertson Cowell and Laurence Powell.]

At the age of 17, the late Mrs. Emma Dusenbury had set out to learn all the songs in the world. Discovering that "people keeps a-makin' songs," she was finally obliged to abandon the project, but not before amassing a remarkably large repertoire. Through the efforts of collectors Laurence Powell and Sidney Robertson Cowell, the old blind lady in a small Ozark village enriched the Archive of Folk Song by 125 valuable songs and ballads.

Child found no source for "The Mermaid" earlier than the mid-eighteenth century Glasgow Lasses Garland, although sailors' superstitions regarding the sighting of a mermaid and setting sail on a Friday are ancient. Much of the song's American perpetuation has been in comic and other popular printed forms. A list of some songsters and collegiate songbooks in which it appeared during the last century is given on page 172 of John Harrington Cox's Folk-Songs of the South (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1925).

"Mask" and "landlord" are not unreasonable substitutes for the nautical terms intended when Mrs. Dusenbury's landlocked environment is taken into consideration. When Mr.

Powell asked what the landlord was doing on board ship, Mrs. Dusenbury replied "Sleepin', I reckon." (Cf. Vance Randolph's Ozark Folksongs (Columbia, Missouri State Historical Society, 1946; vol. I, p. 203).

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1. As I sailed out one Friday night  
I was not fur from land,  
When I spied a pretty girl a-combing up her hair  
With a comb and a glass in her hand.  
  
Chorus:  
And the sea is a-roar, roar, roar,  
And the stormy winds may blow,  
While us poor sailor boys are climbing up the mask,  
And the landlord a-lying down below.
2. Up stepped the captain of our gallant ship,  
A well spoken captain was he,  
Saying we're all lost for the want of a boat,  
And will sink to the bottom of the sea. Chorus.
3. Up stepped the mate of our gallant ship,  
A well spoken mate was he,  
Saying we're all lost for the want of a boat,  
And will sink to the bottom of the sea. Chorus.
4. I have a wife and children three,  
This night they're looking for me,  
They may look, they may wait till the cold water rise,  
They may look to the bottom of the sea. Chorus.
5. I have a mother and sisters three,  
This night they're waiting for me,  
They may look, they may wait till the cold water rise,  
They may look to the bottom of the sea. Chorus.

## APPENDIX

### AN INDEX TO THE CHILD BALLADS AVAILABLE ON LIBRARY OF CONGRESS LONG-PLAYING RECORDS

\*Selections marked with asterisk are also available on 78 rpm records

<u>Title</u>	<u>Child Number</u>	<u>AAFS Number</u>
The Devil's Nine Questions	1	L1 A7*
The False Knight Upon the Road	3	L21 B4*
Sweet William	7	L12 B8*
The Two Sisters	10	L7 A5*
Edward	13	L12 A4*, L57 A2
Wild Boar )	18	L57 A3
Bangum and the Boar )		L57 A4
The Bishop of Canterbury	45	L57 A5
The Two Brothers	49	L7 A3*
Lord Bateman )	53	L12 A1*, L57 B1
Lloyd Bateman )		L57 B2
The Cherry-Tree Carol	54	L12 A2*, L57 B3
Lazarus	56	L57 B4
Lord Thomas and Fair Ellender	73	L7 B1*
Lord Lovel	75	L55 A3
The Three Babes	79	L7 B3*, L58 A1
Barbara Allen	84	L1 A4*, L14 A1* L51 A (incomplete)
30 Versions and Variants of Barbara Allen (some incomplete)		L54
Bolakins	93	L7 B2*
Andrew Batann	167 and 250	L58 A2

<u>Title</u>	<u>Child Number</u>	<u>AAFS Number</u>
The Death of Queen Jane	170	L21 B6*
The Four Marys	173	L7 A4*
The Gypsy Davy	200	L1 A3
The King's Love-Letter	208	L58 A3
The House Carpenter )		L1 A1*
Well Met, My Old True Love )	243	L58 A4
The Ship Carpenter )		L58 A5
There Was an Old and Wealthy Man	272	L58 B1
Our Goodman	274	L12 B8*
The Farmer's Curst Wife )		L1 A2*
Old Woman Under the Hill )	278	L51 A (incomplete)
The Devil and the Farmer's Wife )		L58 B2
The Oxford Merchant	283	L58 B3
The Golden Willow Tree )		L7 A1*, L58 B4
A Ship Set Sail for North America )	286	L58 B5
The Mermaid	289	L58 B6