

THE MANUSCRIPT

"I knew a very wise man that believed that if a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation." — Andrew Fletcher of Saltown.

Of the above the critic might be inclined to say "interesting if true," or perhaps he would be willing to concede the interest without qualification. It appears to be one of those comments that survive because the idea is striking, and because they contain the germ of a truth, that may or may not be wholly supported by fact. Should there be anyone desirous of applying the test to the following summary of the songs of our people, he is hereby warned that he would be subjecting himself to needless mental wear and tear, simply because the test is scarcely applicable. This is to be only the story of the songs current in a limited area, of songs that were composed in many lands. For the greater part of our songs came in with our people, brought from England or Scotland or Ireland, and were treasured as memories of lands left behind forever, treasured even at times when the place of their origin had abandoned them for later melodies. Some of our songs were of Canadian origin it is true, and some were the product of our relatives south of the border. It should be explained also that our songs were learned and sung "by ear" because there were few who could read music even if sheets or books were available; and as there were but few organs and only two or three pianos in the whole country, instrumental accompaniment was very much the exception.

In attempting a recital of our songs one is perforce driven to a somewhat rough classification in which only type songs are mentioned, since a full list would demand unreasonable space. We were of course familiar with certain songs that still are favourites wherever the English language is spoken: "Nancy Lee," "Annie Laurie," "Kathleen Mavourneen." One does not need to wonder about the survival of these songs. They survive because of their universal appeal, quite independent of the fact that one is a sailor song, that the second is initially Scotch, and that the third is a heart cry of emigrating Ireland. The whole explanation is dramatically offered in the story told of some soldiers singing during a lull at the siege of Sebastopol. "Each thought of the girl he loved the best, but all sang 'Annie Laurie'".

As has been intimated, songs from the old land predominated, and it may be added that among these the Celtic was most in evidence, but before going further it should be understood that except in passing reference the source of each song will not affect our classification. This explanation is necessary before speaking of a second type that was very popular in my boyhood days — the super sentimental song. The people of that day took their love affairs seriously, and any song that pictured love in its varied stages of severity, was sure to make a hit, no matter how sad the ending. Indeed an atmosphere of sadness often made for popularity. Therefore in all the offerings, whether from the concert platform or from beside the farm kitchen stove, we looked for the sentimental theme of the love-lorn. Two of these songs, "Juanita" and "In the Gloaming," often

achieved the height of chorus singing. Others that come readily to mind were "Listen to the Mocking Bird," "Sing to Me, Robin," "Lilly Dale," and "Gentle Annie," verses that suited the day of the minuet better than they would suit the day of the Charleston. There was another sentimental type, not love songs in the sense just illustrated: "When You and I were Young Maggie," "Silver Threads Among the Gold," and "Just Before the Battle Mother" will serve as examples. It is not intended to imply that songs of sentiment do not have an appeal in all ages, but simply to record the claim that the period under discussion leaned heavily toward these.

There were some songs, luckily few in number, that I recall even yet with something of a thrill of dread. It is patent that they had been handed down from a remote day when the people took not only their love but also their tragedy seriously. One still occasionally seen in print was known as "The Mistletoe Bough" — and began

The Mistletoe hung in the castle hall,
And the holly branch shone on the old oak wall,
The baron's retainers were blithe and gay,
And keeping their Holy Christmas Day.

It would appear that there had just been a wedding; young Lord Lovell having taken for better or for worse the baron's daughter, a pretty fair sort of a young lady.

And she with her bright eyes seemed to be
The star of the goodly company

She was a good mixer and wanted her father's hired help to have a real party so she proposed that she should be "it" in a game of hide and seek:

Away she ran and the sport began
Each tower to search and each nook to scan.

She was not found that night nor for many years after — but when the bridegroom was about all in from age and worry,

An old oak chest that had long lain hid
Was found in the castle, they lifted the lid,
A skeleton form lay mouldering there
And the bridal wreath of the lady fair,
How sad was her fate, when in sport and jest
She hid from her lord in the old oak chest!
It closed with a spring and her bridal bloom
Lay withering there in a lonely tomb.

The grand finale was a long drawn out "Oh Mistletoe Bough! Oh Mistletoe Bough!"

That song had a thrill, but was tame when compared with another one that recorded the doings of "Lord Thomas, the keeper of the king's deer," also of his worldly old mother, of Fair Eleanor who was not very well fixed financially, and of a party styled the Brown Girl, who was plain but rich. This Lord Thomas must have been the sheik of the day; at any rate he seems to have had no doubt about getting the one he should decide upon. He consulted his mother, the rich one had the preference, and to show there was no hard feeling he called upon Eleanor, to invite her to be among

those present at the wedding. For the same reason apparently she accepted and attended the festivities, but was so indiscreet as to make audible comment about the personal appearance of her successful rival. The bride's retort was probably the "snappy comeback" of that period; from some hidden place she drew forth

A knife both long and sharp
She pierced fair Eleanor in the side,
She pierced her to the heart.

This impromptu interruption of the proceedings did not please Lord Thomas, so to make it a day, he drew his sword and

He cut the little Brown Girl's head off
And kicked it against the wall.

This last performance indicated the temperament of the artist. History does not relate the finish of his lordship, but undoubtedly he pined away and died; at any rate it is a matter of record that there grew a tree out of his grave, also one upon the last resting place of fair Eleanor, and that

They grew so little they grew so slim
That they twined in a true lover's knot.

There was another entitled "The Crumbling Old Stone Wall," the English of which was simply beautiful, but the story intensely sad and tragic. It dealt with the case of a beautiful girl whose love experience came to an end by the failure of her lover to put in an appearance when he should. It was probably typical of a theme popular among writers of the time of the story, and its overwhelming sadness is really redeemed by beauty of expression telling.

One other that we listened to with a different sort of thrill was the song about "The Gypsy," a song we are now told was partly at least founded on fact. This gypsy was a good looking it is to be inferred, was a light stepper, and "sang so sweetly" that he "charmed the heart of the lady." This lady it appears was under the handicap of having a husband and at least one of a family, but this did not cut much figure in her young life, for she capitulated in these words:

Oh yes, I'll leave my houses and lands,
Oh yes, I'll leave my baby,
Oh yes, I'll leave my own wedded lord,
And go with the dark-eyed navie.

One wonders if she was the original "Yes!, Yes!" party; suffice it to say that she did accomplish all that "leaving" she talked about, and went off with the gay and probably not over-clean gypsy. One current approval of this song must have been based on the moral that there is some chance in spite of poverty, that individuality counts after all.

There is one more ballad of this type that might be worth consideration, one that has appeared as a reprint on three different occasions during the past few years. It is entitled "Young Charlotte," and is a harrowing tale of the tragic fate of a belle of a bygone day. It was a bitterly cold night when Charlotte drove with her boy friend to a dance fifteen or twenty miles away. Her mother had wanted her to dress sensibly in view of the distance

and the temperature, but the daughter had ruled otherwise, and had started off clothed rather lightly for the occasion. Neither she nor her partner was very chatty it seems, for it was only at intervals of five miles that they exchanged ideas, and then it was all about the weather. George would break the news that it was cold; the first time Charlotte agreed with the sentiment, but to each later burst of confidence her sole reply was "I'm growing warmer now." This may mean that she was really the prototype of one Couee, or it may only indicate that she was at her limit conversationally. They reached the place where the party was being held, but when George went to help her out of the cutter:

He took her hand in his — Oh God! it was
cold and hard as a stone;
He tore the mantle from her face, and on it
cold stars shone.

You have guessed it: she was frozen to death, and George's evening was spoiled. There was a time when this ballad contained a real thrill for me, but today I cannot accept it as fact, or near fact, because today we see on all sides of us flappers wearing only a fraction of what Charlotte then thought daring, and driving through weather just as severe, without apparent injury — however, they talk oftener and at greater length.

We had our quota of songs that told of incidents pertaining to wars. It was inevitable that we should know the songs of the American Civil war, because many of us had relatives in the United States, and indeed many Canadians had taken part with the North. Whatever the source, we often listened to "John Brown's Body," "Tenting on the Old Camp Ground," "Battle Cry of Freedom," and "Marching through Georgia"; listened sometimes also to "Dixie," "The Bonnie Blue Flag," and "Maryland." Such songs were perhaps more common than songs of European wars, but these were not uncommon by any means. One chap always sang "The Heights of Alma," reminiscent of the Crimean war. Another was sure to sing "Old Erin Far Away," a song strangely like "Bingen on the Rhine," but possessed of more swing. It is rather difficult to explain the melancholy pleasure we found in the lines that ended each verse:

I can no more roam, in my childhood home,
In old Erin far away.

However, our favourite war song was "The Lad in the Scotch Brigade," a product of the war in Egypt and the Soudan. It began

On the banks of the Clyde stood a lad and his lassie,
The lad's name was Georgie, the lassie's was Jean.

The first verse depicted the leave taking; the second told about the fighting and about the death of Georgie; while the last verse dealt with the stricken mother and the sweetheart. The chorus was gripping:

Over the burning plains of Egypt,
Under a searching sun,
He thought of the stories he'd have to tell
To his love when the fight was won.
He treasured with care that dear lock of hair,

For his own darling Jeannie he prayed,
But all prayers were in vain for they'll ne'er see again
The lad in the Scotch brigade.

We did not need to be Scotch to feel the appeal of this war song — we came from races that rather idealized war records, even when these were clouded by death.

It is not just easy to explain the prevalence of Southern negro songs in a country where the snow piled so high, and where we saw a colored man only once in a blue moon. I have thought of one explanation, but it can only partially explain our familiarity with negro songs. An uncle, who was not only a good singer, but was also well trained in formal music, paid more than one visit to the United States, and it is almost certain that he brought back some of these songs, but it is just as certain that he could not have been responsible for all. Of course we heard those that are common now — “Swanee River,” “Old Black Joe,” “Carry me Back to Ole Virginny.” “My Old Kentucky Home,” but also we heard frequently negro songs that are now about forgotten — “Darling Nellie Gray,” “Ella Rhee,” “Kitty Wells,” “Old Uncle Ned,” and “Kingdom Coming.” I have purposely left to the last on this list one that to me is better than any, and yet it is almost wholly forgotten — “My Old Savannah Home.” Since it has almost disappeared it might be well to give one verse and chorus:

Where de balmy airs am sighin' and de roses catch de dew,
And de mockin' birds am singin' in de trees.
Deres a charmin' little city and I'll ebber hold it true,
I'se brought up amongst its butterflies and bees.
Thro' its pastures an' green fields I've played de whole
day long,
Yet from dem all I've been obliged to roam.
But when I think of the happy times, de merry song and dance,
I long to see my Old Savannah Home.

Chorus

I long to see ma home again and feel its scented breeze,
Through its sunny streets I long to roam,
I long to hear dem mockin' birds a-singin' in de trees,
Dat grew around ma old Savannah Home.

The tune is a really fine piece of Southern melody, and its passing is a loss. I do not wonder at our liking for such songs, yet I cannot get away from curiosity as to how in the world so many of them travelled away up here so early.

In a time and place where the ambition of the farmer boy was to go to the “lumber woods,” to the “shanties,” it may well be assumed that many of our songs came through the lumber camp. Not so many of them had to do with the technical side of lumber operations; rather the camp was the clearing-house for a great variety of ballads. It is only fair to say that for the vastly greater part the songs brought from the camps were simple love songs, somewhat the worse, from a literary standpoint, for the wear incident to exchanges between artists. There was a certain number of rude ballads that fairly reeked with shanty atmosphere. There was of course

one that pointed out in no uncertain terms the precedence enjoyed by the lumberjack, in the eyes of the girls at least, over the hayseed who was content to stay all winter on the farm. There were a few, evidently more or less home-made and of very local significance, that held special appeal; they generally aimed to be humorous, and in so far as they went, specialized in detail. The lumber songs that lived the longest were those that recorded tragedies of the woods, whether up the reaches of the Ottawa, or among the pines of Michigan and Wisconsin. A well known favourite of this type was "The Little Yew Plain," a story of one Johnnie Murphy, the fiancé of the school teacher of Little Yew Plain. Johnnie, between courtships, was a raftsman, a jolly raftsman I should say. Unfortunately he was drowned in the lower Wisconsin and the song has to do with bringing to the said schoolmarm the news that she was thus short one lover. The ballad in its inception undoubtedly conformed to the spirit of some old-country ballad, but before it reached me some wag, or wags, had almost wrecked parts of it. When the young lady was giving a detailed description of Murphy, no doubt for purposes of identification, she was made to say:

He wore a large scarf round his body,
While the ends trailed the ground at his side:
His boots, number tens, were of cowhide,
With heels about four inches wide.
He wore a large open-faced ticker,
With a yard, or some more, of steel chain,
When he left here on the raft with Ross Campbell,
To go far from the Little Yew Plain.

One of two things must be apparent, either the song had been tampered with, or that teacher was a cut-up, and had just been practising on Johnnie. I remember one other shanty song that told a story, all too typical of the terrible dangers of the river drive. It told of the forming of the dreaded "jam," and of the call for volunteers:

Some may have been willing, but many there were hung back,
To work upon a Sunday they did not think 'twas right
Till six of our bold Canadian boys did volunteer to go
To break the jam on Gary's Rocks, with their foreman,
Young Munro.

They broke the jam, but lost their lives, and the deed was sung for years. These shanty songs were rude in construction, but it is a pity if types at least cannot be collected and preserved.

It would have been strange if, among all our songs and ballads, the great enterprise of agriculture had not been honoured. First to hand is "The Jolly Ploughboy"—Oh no! not the song of that name, sometimes today attempted by male after-dinner soloists. The song I have in mind is very old indeed, and is about a ploughboy who:

Whistled and he sang as his plough it went along,
That by chance he might spy his lady love.

According to the story he saw her all right, and was getting along all right too, until "her old aged father became this to know", and then there was the very dickens to pay. The old man could not see this hired hand as a

future son-in-law, so he quite naturally set about eliminating him. The age of the story is indicated to a certain extent by what is told next about the old gentleman's actions:

He sent for a "press-gang" and pressed her love away,
And he pressed him to the war to be slain.

Ordinarily that would have been all for Mr. Ploughboy, but there was one thing her father overlooked, namely, that the girl had a bit of available property in her own name.

She dressed herself up in a suit of sailor clothes,
And she lined her pockets with gold.

This ploughboy had picked a winner; the sailor clothes may have been for effect, or for the camera, but the money was to buy his release, because we are told:

She pulled from her pockets the bright yellow gold,
Some ten thousand pounds, or some more,
And she freely paid it down for her jolly plough boy,
And she rolled him in her arms to the shore.

I do not just understand what this last line stands for, but it sounds pleasant; no wonder he was jolly, the shore may have been a long distance away.

The next song with a rural setting was generally known as "The Rolling Stone," for a reason that shall soon be obvious. It was really a rather long-drawn-out debate in verse, between a farmer and his wife, and was no doubt the product of the days of the covered wagon. This farmer had the itching foot, and at last is driven to lay the case before his wife. He speaks his piece; his wife replies; and then they go on by alternate verses to argue the whole question out, and the farmer comes in second. His verse always ended with:

Here I must labour each day in the field
And the winter consumes all the summer doth yield.

while the wife terminates her counter-attack with:

Stick to your farm and you'll suffer no loss,
For a stone that keeps rolling will gather no moss.

Her last card was a trump — a gruesome picture of herself and kiddies after the Indians would be through with the job. The farmer gives up and finishes his last verse with the very original idea that he will not be out by remaining on the farm, because he has noticed that a rolling stone gathers no moss.

I do not know the origin of this third farm song, but it sounds English:

The sun had gone down behind yon hill, and 'way o'er
yon dreary moor,
When weary and lame, a boy there came, up to a farmer's door,
Saying 'can you tell me if any there be, will give to me
employ,
For to plough and to sow, for to reap and to mow, for to be
a farmer's boy.

Rather free with the prepositions it is true, but this was quite characteristic

of old ballads. The boy goes on to explain how he comes to be out of employment, and upon the intercession of the mother and the daughter the farmer decides to take the lad on trial. The last verse tells the outcome:

At length of years the boy grew up
And the good old farmer died;
He left the lad the farm he had,
And his daughter for a bride.
And the boy that was, is a farmer now,
And he often sings with joy,
"Oh the lucky lucky day I came this way
To be a farmer's boy.

This is perhaps on record in some old English collections of rural verse.

Of outlaw songs we had a number, but almost all were about those who went "on the cross" in the old country, from Robin Hood to Rob Roy. The songs about these two outlaws have a wide stage recognition, so I only mention them in passing. Not so well known now is the song about "Willy Reilly and his Colleen Bawn," although a dozen versions are still found in print. Then there is "Brennan of the Moor," and that old song with the haunting tune, "Shamus O'Brien." We had in our midst one authority on the outlaw of the day — he really had the outlaw complex. He knew about Reilly and Brennan and O'Brien in a removed sort of way, but his heart interest began with the James boys and continued unabated to date. When pressed to sing, his responses would likely be:

I am a noted highwayman,
Cole Younger is my name.

He had never been away from home further than a visit to the Model Farm at Ottawa, and he was just about the best behaved citizen in our district, but how he would wail:

For the robbing of the Northfield bank,
We are condemned to lie,
In Stillwater prison,
Until the day we die.

Smile if you like, but tell us what is your form of "make-believe"; if you have none you are not entitled to smile. Years afterwards when I visited Clay county, Missouri, with a local Shorthorn breeder as guide, and once again when I bunked with a fellow who was a close relative of the Daltons, I could not get away from the earnest wish that our old neighbour were alive, so that I could tell him about it.

The comic song of the stage had very little place with us. I remember one that was brought from England and may have been, for ought I know, brought directly from the concert hall. It recounted the woes of a much married man, who had been exposed to six marital experiences, and who was about willing to sign off. A verse was devoted to each spouse, description in the main of her personal appearance and of her taking off, and the chorus ran thus:

There's the fox and the hare,
There's the badger and the bear,
And the birds on the greenwood tree,

There's the pretty little rabbits,
So engaging in their habits,
And they've all got a mate but me.

There must always have been the comic Irish ballad; we had scores of these, but they were rarely finished enough for the stage; at least few seem to have arrived there. Perhaps the best known of the type I have in mind is "Rory O'More," which is fairly familiar today both as to words and music. Not so well known were "Lanigan's Ball," or "Finnigan's Wake," or "Wake of Teddy the Tyler," or "McCarthy's Mare." Apparently in that "distressful country" the places to look for fun had been at fair, dance, or wake, and just as certainly would there be, incidentally, a fight or several fights; these were described in song that was intended to be funny. I hope at least that was the intention for we used to laugh at these songs. Take one of the versions of "Finnegan's Wake," — this was Barney Finnigan, not Tim:

I'm a dacint and labourin' youth,
I was born in the town of Dinshannigan;
I'm a widower now in my youth
Since I buried sweet Mollie McLaughlin,
I've been married but once in my life
And I'll never commit such a sin again
For I found when too late that my wife
Was fond of one Barney Finnigan.

Well Barney had taken it so hard about losing Mollie that

In the struggle his gizzard he broke,
And we had a stiff corpse of ould Finnigan.

The war started at the wake when Mollie manifested altogether too much grief at the demise of Barney. Her husband objected rather forcibly, and was attacked by one of the Finnigan faction:

Tables and chairs were upset,
The fight it began in a minute sure
And divil the stick could I get,
Till I tore the four legs from the furniture.
Then as the blood flew about,
Sure eyes were knocked out and shoved in again
I got a sou-western clout,
That knocked me as stiff as ould Finnegan.

I could give you the whole side-splitting story, but this is enough to suggest the entire scenario; do not miss the point, however, that the author of "Off again; On Again; Gone Again; Finnigan" was not original as to rhyme, for "Finnegan's Wake" long antedated the railway.

This brings us to a group of ballads that of late years have been called "Come All Ye's." A few were English or Scotch, but the bulk were of Irish descent, and were truly ballad, in intent and implement. They took the name "Come All Ye" from a fairly characteristic style of opening which consisted of a more or less comprehensive invitation to all and sundry to gather around and hear something good. Here are the opening lines of three ballads that were well known when I was a boy:

1. You people of this nation of high and low station,
I would have you pay attention and listen to me.
2. Come young and old, come rich and poor,
Come listen while I tell
Of a fair and comely lass
In Lincolnshire did well.
3. Come all ye boys from far and near,
And attention pay to me,
A dreadful story you shall hear
Of my true-love and me.

The tunes were almost always sweet and plaintive. The subject matter was generally of the love story sort — about lovers who had to surmount difficulties, who were usually successful, but not always. Often either the boy or the girl had so much money or was so high born that a marriage seemed to be in the *miracle class*, but somehow or other he or she hurdled the obstacle in most cases. This Wicklow ballad has such a typical beginning:

Young John Reilly was my true lover's name,
Reared near the town of Bray,
He was as fine a young man
As ever you did see,
My parents they had riches
But young Reilly he was poor,
And because I loved my sailor lad,
They could not me endure.

Most of these ballads were local in setting, such as “Blackwater Side” and “Old Longford Town,” and had been sold in “penny slips” in the old country. When quite a young lad I was working in haying time for an Irish farmer. One day, when I thought I was alone, I was carolling —

One Paddy Doyle lived in Killarney,
Courtied a maid, one Biddy O'Toole,
Her tongue was tipped with a bit of the blarney
That seemed to Pat like the golden rule.

Suddenly I heard almost a shout: “How do you come to know that?” I explained as to where I had heard it, and also that by grace of a grandmother born in the “Little Town in the Ould Country Down,” Dromore, and through the blessing of a good memory, the song had stuck in my mind. “Boy! Boy!” said the old man, “when I left County Leitrim as a lad, they were selling that in ‘penny slips’.”

It is rather a pity that the origin of the tunes and some of the words of these old imported ballads should not be traced. Few if any in this country can vouch for the words, let alone the tunes. Just as a sample of what might be done I am here making an attempt to put on record two old tunes. I never saw either set to music before, and it is almost a safe bet that few if any ever saw them.... The first is an example of a tune that had become familiar to the ear down through succeeding generations, and had many a song hooked up with it. I first learned it as the tune to “Ould Skibbereen,” a song of the early Irish evictions in Queen Victoria's time.... [The music

mentioned was not reproduced in the manuscript.]

The other ... would scarcely be called a lullaby, yet it has given a fine imitation of just that very thing for three generations....

Ould Joe Finley had a pig,
Too-ra-loo-ral, fol-dol-the-dee,
Ould Joe Finley had a pig,
Ould Joe Finley had a pig
That always stayed little and never grew big,
To-me-fol-the-diddle-o-dee.

Ould Joe Finley built a sty.
And the pig and the ould woman stood right by,
(There is no need of writing in all the lilts and repetitions)

The ould woman went to feed her pig,
But when she got there the pig was dead.

The ould woman mourned herself to death
And the old man died for the want of breath,

Here's the end of one, two, three,
The pig, the ould woman, and Joe Finley.

I have so far striven to give a sketch of the songs current during boyhood days, mostly folk songs and ballads, some of which are still to the fore. They were sometimes crude, sometimes mutilated through careless use. On the other hand they were always clean, nothing suggestive; the only hint of the triangle problem, was in such a comic attempt as the story of "Barney Finnegan." The time came when little by little, like the very thin edge of a very long and slim wedge, there entered a new era, the era of what was called the "popular songs." I cannot tell when the earlier of these were given to the world, but I have a fairly definite recollection of when they first crossed my path. I think it was in the fall of 1888, about the time the storekeepers would hang out the first coon coats (\$45), that Hamlin's Wizard Oil Company, with its team of four vari-coloured horses, entered our town for a week's campaign, a few songs and jokes and a lot of selling talk. A long cadaverous chap with a Prince Albert coat and blackstring tie sang about his "Little Annie Rooney." I could hardly wait for Friday night to get home to spring it on the folks. Well Annie is still with us, and Joe is still blowing about her. A year or so later a chap tried to work some sort of a verbal sell on me, about a party named McGinty, and the upshot was that, after a little research work, I learned about the trials and triumphs of that famous Irishman, from the time he fooled McCann at the stone wall, through his experiences in the coal hole, and the jail, to his last great exploit, his marine adventure:

Down went McGinty to the bottom of the sea,
And he must be getting wet,
For he hasn't come up yet,
But they say his ghost comes round the docks before
the break of day,
Dressed in his best suit of clothes.

I left home that winter and went to the New England States, only to run

into three new song favourites — “Maggie Murphy’s Home,” “Home Down on the Farm,” and “Comrades.” Here and there Maggie is still telling people that

You’re welcome every evening
At Maggie Murphy’s home.

But the others are not moving. In Wisconsin, in the summer of ’93, everyone was singing “After the Ball”; what a run it enjoyed! The following winter in a lumber camp in the northern peninsula of Michigan, a frontier commercial traveller came in with the tote team, and told us after supper how Jim Corbett had trimmed Charley Mitchell; and then he sat up on the wanigan box and sang “Two Little Girls in Blue.” I hold the proud distinction of having introduced this song to the old home district next summer. That was the summer too when Daisy Bell sang the saga, or whatever you call it, of the tandem bicycle, and “Sweet Marie” had that chap faltering at her feet. After that these songs came along a little faster, and still a little faster until a fellow just could not keep up. Pretty soon people began to quit calling them popular songs, because so many could not all be popular at the same time, and in this day of quantity production the idea would be even more absurd. There are two blessings accruing from this same quantity production nevertheless. In the first place, if a song is silly, or if a song is catty, or if a song is somewhat coarse or suggestive, don’t worry; it will be as a tale that is told within the next few days. There is a windy city in the West, where if a fellow loses his hat he does not run after it, he just grabs the next that comes along. That is all you can do with the material whirling out of the present day musical mill.

The other advantage lies in the fact that no fool now has time to write a parody, and for that let us give thanks. There is scarcely one of those dear old “popular songs” about which I do not recall some miserable parody, and I just cannot forget the jingling nuisance. To show the younger generation what they are escaping let me cite an example. “Home Down on the Farm” was written in the days of the popularity of such rustic plays as “The Old Homestead” and “The County Fair.” This was also the period of the stage farmer, as well as of the stage Irish man, creatures never seen in real life. The song in question was a sweet thing, beginning:

When a boy I used to dwell
In a home I loved so well,
Far away among the clover and the bees,
Where the morning glory vine
Round our cabin walls did twine,
And the robin redbreast sang up in the trees.

It went on to tell in an appreciative way of the brothers and of mother and father, and in the last verse, of that visit which many of us are sure to pay to the old home when other people are living in it. It was a great favourite, was that song, until the parody hound had time to get in his dirty work; I always felt that he literally killed it. There can be no harm now in repeating the parody in this song once offered to us by a standard stage rube of that day — long chin whisker, tobacco juice, pair of pants patched front and rear, precariously maintained by one suspender, attached by three-inch

nails, top boots, and a straw to chew. This is what this caricature intoned nasally:

My father had a beard
That he never did get sheared,
It was four feet long, I measured with a tape.
One night the house caught fire,
And we had no rope or wire,
So we used his whiskers for a fire escape.
I did first descend
Then came Sister Lend:
Then Mother, but she filled us with alarm,
For she was so big and stout
That she pulled the whiskers out
Of my father's dear old face down on the farm.

How, I ask you, could a young fellow, or an old fellow for that matter, retain his first love for the original, with that infernal jingle in his ears? You just could not lose it. We are safe during this period of quantity output from such infliction, but if there is a parody criminal alive today, an arrested case so to speak, I want him to know it gives me great pleasure to reflect on how he must suffer as he contemplates some of the passing possibilities and knows nobody would wait to listen to him. Thus every age has its sunshine as well as its shadow. Let us "Gather up the Sunbeams."

RECORDS NOTED

In the past year four records by traditional Canadian singers have appeared. This is a remarkable development as practically none were produced in the previous five years.

The Canadian Folk Music Society was instrumental in getting two of them issued. *Songs of the Newfoundland Outports*, songs from Kenneth Peacock's mammoth collection, was sponsored by the Society and produced by Kelly Russell of Pigeon Inlet records. *Suivant l'étoile du nord: La Tradition acadienne* presents both English and French songs sung by Allan Kelly. It was produced by Ronald Labelle for Le Centre d'Études acadiennes, Université de Moncton, with the help of the Society. Both are available from our mail order service at our Calgary address.

The other two records come from the east coast. *Miramichi Folksong Festival* was recorded in Newcastle, N.B., under the direction of the Festival's director, Susan Butler. It includes items by Marie Hare, Allan Kelly, and Harold R.P. Whitney, among others. *Marasheen Farewell* is a locally produced record of old-time house party songs from Merasheen Island.