

BOOK REVIEW

FOLKSONGS OF BRITAIN AND IRELAND edited by Peter Kennedy.
London: Cassell, 1975.

This long-awaited volume is certainly the largest and possibly the most important song collection to come out of the British Isles. It is massive: 824 pages with 360 songs, and comprehensive: including not only English, Lowland Scottish, and Anglo-Irish, but Welsh, Scottish, Irish and Manx Gaelic, Cornish, Channel Islands, French, and even some in the Romany cant of the travelling people. The distinctive languages each have their own sections and the songs in English are grouped under the subject headings: Courtship, Seduction, Occupations, False Love and True, Uneasy Wedlock, Country Life, Good Company, Diversion, and Newsworthy Sensations. All the songs came from traditional singers, and many of them are available on cassette or records. It should be noted that the emphasis is on folk songs rather than ballads: a few broadside ballads are included but the older popular ballads are not.

Each section has an informative introduction and is followed by notes on the individual songs, with a list of recorded and printed versions. Most of the recorded versions cited are in the BBC archives or private collections; almost the only commercial records mentioned are the Caedmon series, *Folksongs of Britain*. A more complete listing of commercial records by traditional singers would have been helpful.

To Canadians this book is of particular interest because it includes so many ancestors or relatives of songs that have been preserved in our country. For example, one of our few bilingual songs, "I Went to the Market," is obviously derived from a French song, "La fille de l'avocat," found in Guernsey, and the French-Canadian versions of "Ma mere m'envoie-au marche" are very close to a version from Jersey.

Among the songs in English, a surprising number have been found in Canada: far too many to list in detail. Those of which I have found Ontario versions include "The Bonny Wee Window," "Young Roger Esquire," "The Bonny Labouring Boy," "The Blackwaterside," "The False Young Man," "The Nobleman's Wedding," "Yon Green Valley," "The Baldheaded End of the Broom," "The Crab Fish," "Never Wed an Auld Man", "The Old Woman of Blichter Town," "I Wished to be Single Again," "The Foggy, Foggy Dew," "The Haselbury Girl," "The Long Peggins Awl," "The Miller's Last Will," "The Farmer's Boy," "Van Diemen's Land," "What's the Life of a Man," "John Barleycorn," "The Crocodile," "The Frog and the Mouse," "The Ram Song," "Soldier, Soldier," "Brennan's on the Moor," "Derry Gaol," "Donnelly and Cooper," "Erin Go Bragh," "The Lakes of Shallin," "Newlyn Town," "The Oxford Girl," "Polly Vaughan," and "Green Grows the Laurel". Many more have been found in the Maritimes and Newfoundland. Of special interest are ones like "The Roving Journeyman" which inspired "The Roving Shantyboy" and "Ye Maidens of Ontario," "Jim the Carter Lad" which provided the pattern for numerous lumbercamp songs, and "Six Jolly Millers" which was transferred to the Cape Breton mines.

— E.F.