

JOHN PEEL
THE MERMAID
EARL RICHARD
EARL OF MURRAY
THE RED HERRING
GREENLAND FISHERY
BAILIFF'S DAUGHTER
A NORTH COUNTRY MAID
KING ARTHUR HAD THREE SONS
TOMORROW IS ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

**ANGLO-AMERICAN
BALLADS**
sung by **HERMES NYE**

FOLKWAYS RECORD N.Y.

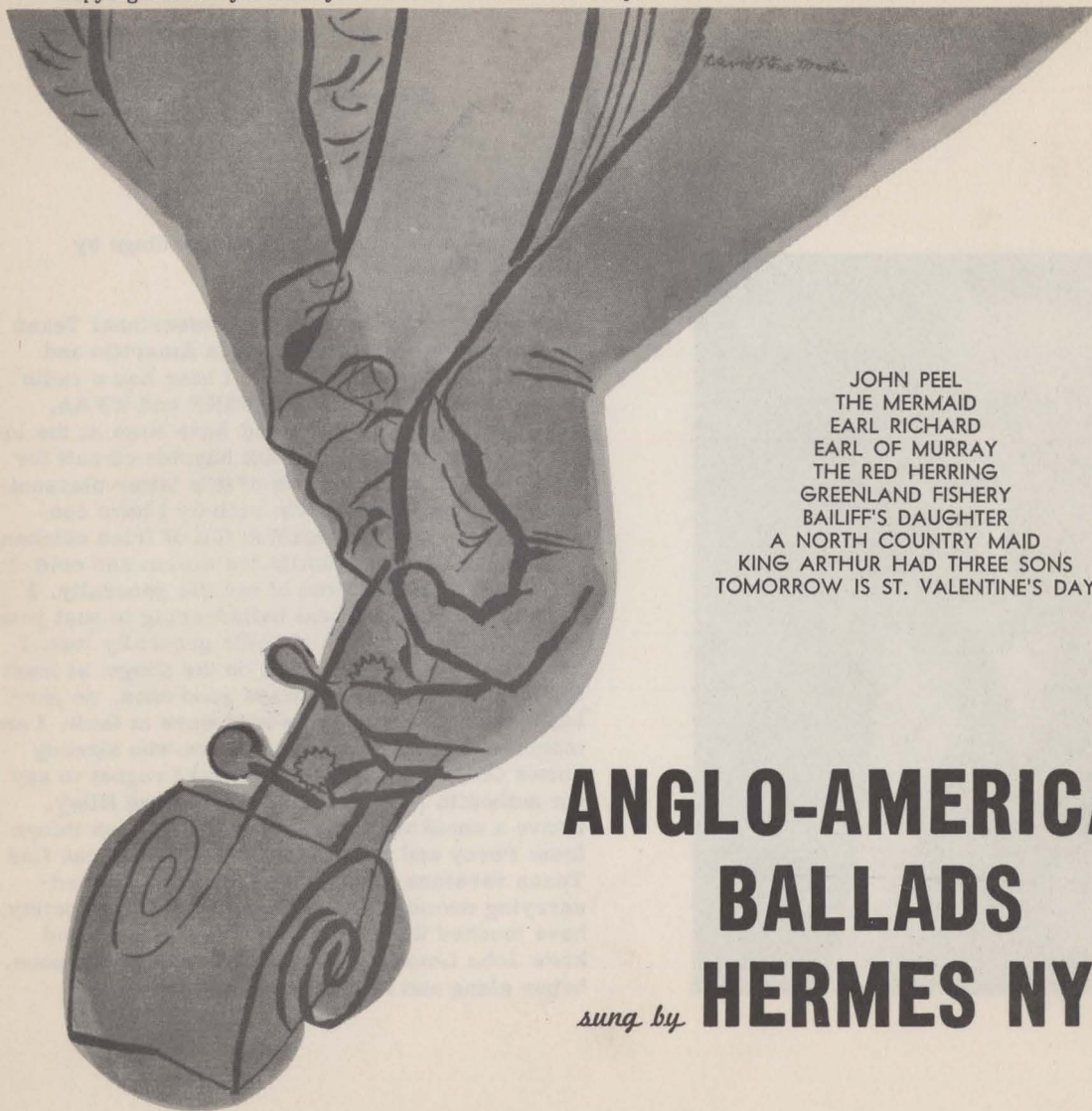
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Anglo-American Ballads

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Introduction and notes on the recordings by
Hermes Nye

- I am a lawyer by trade and a professional Texan by inclination -- having lived in Amarillo and then Dallas since about 1927. I have had a radio program on Dallas stations KSKY and WFAA, have done some TV work and have been on the local luncheon club and Baptist hayride circuit for many years. In the course of this latter pleasant and highly unremunerative activity I have consumed many a No. 2 washtub full of fried chicken, hard rolls, melting vanilla ice cream and cold coffee, and had the time of my life generally. I have done some political balladeering in past years, noting with regret that my side generally lost. I have tried not to blame this on the songs; at least the tunes I stole were always good ones, so perhaps my store-boughten words were at fault. I am married, have a four year old son who already knows Old Blue, Aunt Rhody, and I regret to say the authentic Navy version of One Eyed Riley. I have a sneaking fondness for the English things from Percy and Child, especially when I can find Texas versions. I have been for years a card-carrying member of the Texas Folk Lore Society, have touched the hem of Dobie's garments and knew John Lomax. I like college kids, corn pone, bebop slang and flamenco guitar picking.

Hermes Nye

Band 1. Tomorrow Is St. Valentine's Day
This Elizabethan torch song shows up as one of Ophelia's "mad" songs in the Fourth Act of "Hamlet". I like to think that it was a song Shakespeare learned in Stratford before he came up to London. Commentary among the pundits on the song is hard to find; in Victorian times at least they were occupied mostly with apologizing for Ophelia knowing such stuff in the first place and even invented a mythical nurse of the out-spoken type that Juliet had, to account for it. I could have told them that Ophelia learned those songs from her schoolmates, just the way the girls down at Sweetbrier today learn "Ragged but Right", and "One-Eyed Riley".

At any rate, it is a pleasure to recall the old superstition that the first man seen by a girl on St. Valentine's day was her valentine or sweetheart, at least for the time being; and to guarantee matters, nothing could beat standing under the window waiting for it to get light and for the young man to come out.

Most of the collections (among them that most delightfully entitled "Pills to Purge Melancholy") of one hundred and fifty years ago include this song.

Band 2. A North Country Maid

Lucy E. Broadwood and J. A. Fuller Maitland in their volume of "English County Songs" say that this ballad came out of Westmoreland, adding that Chappell's "Popular Music of the Olden Time" includes it, and that other tunes are used with the same words. It is also mentioned in Scott's "Rob Roy". Speaking of Old Mabel, the narrator of the tale says, " - - - she concluded with a sigh the favorite old ditty, which I then preferred, and -- why should I not tell the truth? -- which I still prefer to all the opera airs ever minted by the capricious brain of an Italian Mis. D. --

Oh, the oak, the ash, and the bonny ivy tree
They flourish best at home in the North
Countrie."

My father, God rest his soul, used to sing this back on the farm in Kansas in 1914, and then he would play the melody on a black wood Myers action flute. His fluting was better than his voice, and the flute was cracked, but the tune was all there, and the fine words.

Band 3. King Arthur Had Three Sons

A nonsense song found everywhere, and if one or more historical and legendary characters are thrown into the pot for good measure, who cares? Whether it's "King Arthur Had Three Sons", "Oliver Cromwell Is Dead And Gone", "Marlborough Goes To War", or even "They Sent for MacArthur to Come to Tulagi", you have the fun of a good bouncing rhythm that anybody can pick up after a first hearing.

Band 4. Earl Richard

Young Huntin, Lord William, Young Redin -- under various titles and in various versions this tragedy of a rash young man and a brash young woman was known to most of the early collectors. Herd, Motherwell, Kinloch and Buchan all knew it, and Sir Walter Scott put it into his "Minstrelsy" with the note that it came to him through his famous Ettrick Shepherd and that it could be traced back several generations but had never been in print.

Band 5. Greenland Fishery

Note the similarity of this tune to that of "The Mermaid". Cecil Sharp found this song in Somerset about fifty years ago. Not long after he was chasing down ballads all over the Eastern mountains of this country, riding mule back and shank's mare over slippery trails to hear "Barbara Ellen" for the five hundredth time to a dulcimer accompaniment.

Professor Child latched on to it, and it would not surprise any of the aforementioned to know that the ballad according to Mrs. Arch Swank of Dallas was being sung around Fayetteville, Arkansas in 1945 under the hill-billy title of "Love Hennerly",

with the place name of Richard's Wall changed to
Arkansas, and the faire ladye doing her own
totin':

"She taken him by the long and yaller hair;
She taken him by the knee;
She taken him down to the river there
An' throwed him in the deep.

'Lay there, lay there, Love Hennery,'
 says she,
'Til the meat rots from yore bones;
No woman alive in Arkansas
Shall keep what is mine own.'"

Band 6. Earl of Murray, or The Bonnie Earl of Murray.

"The 7 of Februarij this zeire, 1592, the Earle of Murray was cruelly murthered by the Earle of Huntley, at his house in Dunibrisel, in Fyffeshyre, and with him Dumbar, Shriffe of Murray; it (was) given out, and publickly talked that the Earle of Huntley was only the instrument of perpetrating this facte, to satisfie the Kinges jealousie of Murray, quhom the Queine, more rashlie than wyslie, some few days before had commendit in the Kinges heiringe, with too many epithetts of a proper and gallant man," says Motherwell, the collector, quoting Sir James Balfour the historian.

Bishop Percy says that in his time the "present Lord Murray hath now in his possession a picture of his ancestor naked and covered with wounds, which had been carried about, according to the custom of that age, in order to inflame the populace to revenge his death."

However this may be, you can well imagine the hawking of the ballad about the streets and the tears of sympathy for he who "might have been a king". This, by the way, seems to be the immediate cause for the bonny earl's demise, Murray having been in cahoots with one Bothwell in an attempt to kill the king. For lack of popular appeal, this small element of the truth never got into the ballad, nor into another song on the same theme, published about the same time.

Side II

Band 1. John Peel

This robust old fox hunting song is known around the world for its wonderful story, and for that best of all qualities in a folk ballad, a good singing chorus where everybody can join in. It sounds best when you are all around the fire drinking hot rum after a skiing jaunt or perhaps on a picnic under a Texas October moon at that delicious time when everybody has had all the beans, beer and barbecue he can hold and nobody is quite bored enough to go home.

After all this tall talk it is a come-down to admit that the present version came out of a Girl Scout songbook in the possession of Ann Lee of Amarillo, now a producer of plays at Phoenix and Santa Fe, but at that time a fellow second violin in the Amarillo Symphony. For some reason this song is seldom printed and I was glad to get it, Girl Scouts or no Girl Scouts, and to thank Ann for it then and also now.

Band 2. The Mermaid

When you start going back, and I mean really away back into the old songs you soon find that elfin knights, demon lovers, elf-king's daughters, mermaids and mermen are a dime a dozen. Sometimes mermaids will prophesy to you, other times they assume human form and marry you but they are under a curse or spell and soon leave you for a more congenial and certainly more humid atmosphere; at still other times you see them, fall in love with them and pretty soon you are dead. Just to make it more romantic and to sell more ballad sheets, it is generally when you are about to be married that this happens.

Of course all this was too much for the materialistic nineteenth century, so our Mermaid ballad has its burlesque element, or to get literary about it, its Sancho Panza who cares much more for his scullery utensils than he does for any creature of the deep no matter how lovely.

Child's collection contains a legend on the mermaid theme, "Clerk Colvill, of the Mermaid", and from Finlay's old collection of Scottish ballads we get a description of the creature herself from an eyeball witness:

"Gowden glist the yellow links
That round her neck she'd twine;
Her een were of the skyie blue,
Her lips did mock the wine.

The smile upon her bonnie cheek
Was sweeter than the bee;
Her voice excell'd the birdie's sang
Upon the birchen tree."

The cook had probably never had it so good.

Band 3. The Red Herring
Sing the kids in the Ozarks,

"What shall we do with the old sow's hide?
Make as good a saddle as you ever did ride,"

knowing little and caring less about the Somerset youngsters and their red herring's tail. Go Down Under, and you probably find them singing in the streets,

"What shall we do with the kangaroo's nose,
Make as good a needle as ever sewed clothes."

You are never very much surprised when an old friend turns up in new clothes, in this business.

Band 4. The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington
This fine old soap-opera is found in Percy's Reliques, Ritson's Ancient Songs, and of course in Child's collection. The plot which will not bear examination is forgotten as any operatic plot should be, while we listen to the plaintive tune and wait for the happy ending.

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 FP20 BEASTS, BIRDS, BUGS & LITTLE FISHES
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 FP36 ANTHOLOGY OF NEGRO POETS, *self-read*
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SIDE I

FP 37 A

Band 1. TOMORROW IS ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

Band 2. A NORTH COUNTRY MAID

Band 3. KING ARTHUR HAD THREE SONS

Band 4. EARL RICHARD

Band 5. GREENLAND FISHERY

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Long Playing Non-Breakable Micro Groove 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ RPM

ANGLO-AMERICAN FOLK SONGS
Sung by Hermes Nye with Guitar

SIDE II

FP 37 B

Band 1. JOHN PEEL

Band 2. THE MERMAID (Landlubber)

Band 3. THE RED HERRING

Band 4. THE BAILIFF'S DAUGHTER

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