

FALSE TRUE LOVERS

Folkways Records FG 3564

A collection of
British love songs about love,
adapted and sung by
Shirley Elizabeth Collins
of Sussex, England,
with guitar and five string
banjo accompaniment by
John Hasted, Ralph Rinzler,
Guy Carawan and Miss Collins.
With notes by Alan Lomax.



I Drew My Ship
The Irish Boy
The Spermwhale Fishery
Dennis O'Reilly
My Bonny Miner Lad
Just as the Tide Was Flowing
Bobby Shaftoe
Richie Story
The Unquiet Grave
The Swapping Song
Poor Old Horse
The False True Love
The Foggy Dew
Mowing the Barley
Scarborough Fair
The Cruel Mother
The Bonny Cuckoo
The Queen of May
Died for Love

FALSE TRUE LOVERS

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

Library of Congress Catalogue Card No. R-60-332

© 1960 FOLKWAYS RECORDS & SERVICE CORP.
632 Broadway, NYC, USA 10012

WARNING: UNAUTHORIZED REPRODUCTION OF THIS
RECORDING IS PROHIBITED BY FEDERAL LAW AND SUBJECT TO
CRIMINAL PROSECUTION.

FOLKWAYS RECORDS Album No. FG 3564
©1959 by Folkways Records & Service Corp.
117 west 46th street NYC. USA.

FALSE TRUE LOVERS

A collection of

British love songs about love,

adapted and sung by

Shirley Elizabeth Collins

of Sussex, England,

with guitar and five string

banjo accompaniment by

John Hasted, Ralph Rinzler,

Guy Carawan and Miss Collins.

With notes by Alan Lomax.

Introduction by Alan Lomax...

In the British-American song tradition folk singers generally reach their prime between the ages of thirty-five and fifty and often continue to sing extremely well into their seventies. This is a generalization which applies, with some exceptions of course, to most of the areas I know in North America and Europe. If it is true ---and in so vast and complex a field as folk-song, generalization is difficult --- the explanation may turn out to be something like the following.

On the whole our "big tunes" are of a contemplative, restrained and somewhat melancholy character. The songs themselves, are usually serious, often tragic in content. Normally the singer functions as a bard, a story-weaver, performing in solo for his silent audience. Thus his authority as a person plays an important part in his effectiveness with his audience. His success as a story teller, of course, depends in part upon his mature understanding of the events he is narrating. As a musician, his art is largely the product of the skill and taste with which he decorates the solo melody in various rather subtle traditional ways.

In Gaelic-speaking Ireland, when a singer has full command of these traditional techniques of ornamenting tunes, they say he has "blás". The equivalent expression in English would be singing style, but that does not quite express the whole of the idea contained in the Irish word. Actually here we are close to the central mystery of the art of singing in the Western European solo tradition. "Blás" does not stand for just musicianship, but for the manner in which the singer varies the tune in slight but metrically and emotionally significant ways from stanza to stanza, but without obtruding his personality too blatantly---it refers to subtle tempo changes which accommodate lines of varying length---it has to do with the way in which certain phrases are emphasized or given color by changes in vocal timbre---; and all of these things are ways of linking the verse to the tune and require talent, practice and taste on the part of the singer.

The authority of a singer is, therefore, summed up for the Irish in the term "blás", and, ultimately, it seems to me, this authority depends upon his emotional maturity or, at least, upon his grasp of the content of the songs he sings and the subtle hidden currents of emotion in these songs. In most cases, therefore, since so many of these songs are tragic and, in their way, art of a high order, a singer weathered by time

and buffeted by the disappointments and tragedies which are normal to life, can more effectively realize this inner content. His "blas" improves with age even though his voice may lose its youthful freshness. Thus it is to be expected that singers in our culture would come to full possession of their powers as they reached their maturity.

"Maturity" is, of course, a vague term, which implies loss as well as gain. Nothing is more haunting than to hear a young girl, as yet untouched by years, singing one of the big sad songs, brooding romantically over the sorrowful tale, almost seeming to yearn to have the experiences, herself. This, it seems to me, is part of the pleasure I have in listening to Shirley Collins sing.

But there is more to this matter. A young person, growing up within a folk culture acquires his "blas" as he learns his songs. His manner of singing is an integral part of the whole of each song, and this is precisely what most city singers of folk songs lack and can acquire only after years of study and practice. In both the folk and city environments, however, singers ripen at different ages, depending on their talent and upon their empathy with the material, itself. But I should think it would be comforting for anyone interested in the art of folk-singing to reflect that, all things being equal, he need not fear the roughening effect of time on his vocal chords nearly so much as the pop singer or the art singer in our culture. His "blas" or his stylistic grasp of the folk songs he loves will gradually improve, as he grows older, if he is faithful to the canons of folk-singing and does not give in to the temptations to sing in either the "classical" or the "pop" styles

As I write this I am listening to the most recent recordings of Muddy Waters, the blues singer. I found Muddy seventeen years ago in Mississippi and recorded him for the Library of Congress. He is still working with the same stylistic materials he used at that time, and, considering that he has lived and sung since then in the world of the commercial blues in Chicago, his style has remained remarkably intact. His voice has coarsened, he has "improved" his accent and this has erased some of his earlier subtlety; he has also learned to work with a band so that his phrasing and his vocalizing are more cut and dried than formerly; yet on the whole he has gained as a singer. He is in complete command of the blues today, and can do whatever he chooses to do in coloring the melodic line to match the flow of the text.

Jean Ritchie, a singer with another folk background, has also stuck to her native Kentucky style and seems to me to sing with more authority and with finer "blas" than when I first worked with her ten years ago. Peggy Seeger, who learned her songs from field recordings when she was a child, has a clear idea of how she wishes to sing and despite the fact that her voice is very small, and that she has never lived the life of the "folk", steadily improves as a singer with every year. An even more remarkable case is that of Jack Elliott, who was born and raised in Brooklyn. Most of his friends despaired of his ever acquiring a "style of his own", as Jack was content for many years to sing Woody Guthrie's songs exactly as Woody sang them. To many people Jack seemed for a time just a pale carbon copy of Woody. But somewhere in this process, Jack learned the language of Southwestern singing and the last time I heard him was able to lend his own "blas", composed of elements from a wide range of Southern white and Negro styles to many kinds of songs. Furthermore, everything seemed relaxed and natural as it came from Jack, and I felt sure, as I listened, that he would continue to grow in stature as a singer of folk songs.

It is in this sense, especially, that I find Miss Collins an important figure in the English folk song scene. Her problems are quite different from those of most American singers, as the English folk song "blas" has been in decay for generations. Although it has been possible to find single ballad singers here and there in Southern England, few communities exist where the tradition is intact and where there remains a clear-cut "blas" which can serve as the model for a singer of this generation. The majority of contemporary country singers tend to be old people with broken voices and with only a trace of the magic that so touched Sharp when he went collecting in Southern England two generations ago.

Shirley had the good fortune to grow up in a family of rural working-class intellectuals. Her grandfather, Fred Ball, was a landscape gardener

at Telham in Sussex, who went the rounds of the country pubs on Saturday, singing folk songs, not only for his own pleasure, but because he was proud of the musical heritage of his peasant ancestors. He and his two brothers formed an impromptu pub orchestra of piccolo, tin whistle, accordion, spoons and tea tray and stomped and jangled out the old marching tunes and reels. Then on Sunday morning the Balls gathered in the loft of the Telham church where they formed the whole of the church choir. Christmas times, the whole family, including the children, were expected to know a book-full of traditional carols. Shirley remembers, during World War II, when the Nazi bombers were coming in low over the English coast and buzzing Hastings where she grew up, that her Grandma Ball would sing her to sleep in the air-raid shelter with the old ballads of love and parting.

In school, of course, Shirley learned the Cecil Sharp songs of Southern England, which have for many years formed the basis of the musical education of the young people of Britain. But to her they had a different meaning than to many young girls. First of all, they had the same quality as the traditional songs of her grandparents, and she felt free to apply her family-acquired style to them. Thus there are many songs in Shirley's repertoire, which, though based in Sharp's arranged versions, are clear-cut folk variants, with the style reapplied and the song coming alive again and beginning to grow in the folk manner, that is, within the emotional and musical canons of the Sussex style.

Many of her relatives and close family friends are painters and writers, with a strong bias toward regional subjects and a passionate desire to celebrate the character of the Southern English working class. From them Shirley acquired a fierce pride in the music she had inherited. Singing it truly, performing it with the artistry of her folk ancestors is what she desires passionately to do. For her, the soft landscape of Southern England, the slurred accent of Southern speech are utterly charming and delightful. When she sings, she is vocalizing her identity with the Southern English countryside and its culture. As her family has never had money, she was raised poor and felt, in the way that only a young girl feels it, the harshness of reality and the tormenting bite of poverty as they fall upon the hearts of the young women of Sussex, the makers and the heroines of many of these songs.

For the last several years, Shirley has lived in London, feeling, as many young Britishers do today, that to sing traditional ballads is the finest of the arts. She has learned several hundred songs by ear and from the collections of Sharp, both English and American, but has brought to each one of them, not her own individual creative wish, as much as an inherited style of singing, which has enriched them all. Finally, she has tackled, virtually alone and trusting only in her own sure instincts, the difficult task of arranging accompaniments for her repertoire.

Instrumental accompaniment has not been part of the Southern English folk scene for centuries. Indeed, one might say that the American mountaineer with his banjo, rediscovered an accompanying technique for the ancient modal tradition of Britain. I think Shirley's instinct was right in deciding to try to set her Southern English melodies to American five-string banjo accompaniment. Her teacher, that remarkable banjo-playing physicist, John Hasted, has a generous heart, a genuine love of the real thing and a good banjo technique, but a much less sure way of dealing with these gentle and rather placid English tunes, than has Miss Collins.

Thus Shirley has been working on her own and in her own way for the last three or four years. During the whole time I knew her her command of her songs and her grasp of singing style grew surer. And this was all the more remarkable, in that she was slowly picking her way back across almost a century, finding for herself the traditional heart of each song, and making it come alive again, but in an increasingly tasteful folk manner. This album captures something of what she had learned how to do by about April of 1957. At that time she still needed her more technically accomplished friends to help out on the accompaniments. Today, I understand, she has found her own arrangements for almost everything she sings---a major musical accomplishment. What comes through, however, is sincerity, purity of instinct and a tremendous delicacy of feeling. Here one occasionally has that rarest of musical experiences---hearing a

young girl singing alone in the house or garden, dreaming of love. This is a quality which Shirley is bound to lose, as time passes, but I am sure she is fully upon the right road and that by the time she has reached the half century mark, she will sing with the great "blas" of a Texas Gladden, an Aunt Molly Jackson, or an Elizabeth Cronin.

Notes on the songs by S. Collins and A. Lomax

SIDE I, Band 1: I DREW MY SHIP

(Stokoe-Collins) was collected and published by John Stokoe in SONGS AND BALLADS OF NORTHERN ENGLAND with no source mentioned. Though it is similar in form and content to many other aubades or dawn serenades, we have not been able to find another song to which this is precisely akin. The listener who cares to compare the recorded version with that published by Stokoe will see how Miss Collins has breathed life back into the print and made something lovely and alive out of an unimpressive folk fragment.

I drew my ship into the harbour,
I drew it up where my true love lay.
I drew it close by into her window
To listen what my love did say.

"Who's there that knocks loud at my window?
Who knocks so loud and would come in?"
"It is your true love, who loves you dearly,
Then rise, dear love, and let him in."

Then slowly, slowly got she up,
And slowly, slowly came she down,
But before she got her door unlocked,
Her true love had both come and gone.

He's brisk and braw, he's far away,
He's far beyond yon raging main,
Where bright eyes glancing, and fishers dancing
Have made him quite forget his own.

SIDE I, Band 2: THE IRISH BOY

(Collins) Though we have found nothing quite like it in print, this song is clearly a fragment of one of the many ballads of Irish immigration so common in the 19th century. The tune resembles Margaret Barry's Mantle So Green, but the song is a folk creation of Shirley Collins.

His name I love to mention, in Ireland he was born,
I once loved him dearly, but alas now he's gone;
Still in all my dear dreaming, there's none I can
see,
For I still love the young man who said he loved
me.

He went to America, he sailed on the sea,
And the face of my true love I no longer can see.
Still in all my dear dreaming, there's none I
can find,
For I might have been married to the man who was
mine.

SIDE I, Band 3: THE SPERMWHALE FISHERY

(Coll. and arr. by A.L. Lloyd) is a variant of the widely-sung broadside ballad, The Lowlands of Holland, which was published in 1776 in Herd's Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs as well as in the Roxburghe broadside collection. A.L. Lloyd printed this Lancashire variant in The Singing Englishman, and it is surely one of the most beautiful of the love songs of the sea.

Last night I was a-married
And on my marriage bed;
There came a bold sea-captain
And stood at my bed-head.
"Arise, arise, you married man
And come along with me
To the cold, cold coast of Greenland
To the spermwhale fishery."

Now Greenland is a dreadful place,
A place that's never green.
It's a wild inhabitation
For a lover to be in.
Where the keen winds blow and the whale-fish go,
And daylight's seldom seen;
And the cold, cold coast of Greenland
Lies between my love and me.

No shoes nor stockings I'll put on
 Nor comb go in my hair;
 Nor any lamp or candlelight
 Burn in my chamber bare.
 Nor shall I lie with any young man
 Until the 'app I 'asp
 Now the cold, cold coast of Greenland
 Parted my love and me.

SIDE I, Band 4: DENNIS O'REILLY

(Coll. and arr. by Waters and Collins)
 is an instance of the speed with which folk
 songs are traveling nowadays. It began
 its life as one of the many songs of the Irish
 immigrants to Australia. Mister Goodwin of
 Leichhardt, New South Wales, picked it up on
 the Namucca River of N.S.W. and, when he was
 73, sang it for Cecil English and John Meredith.
 From then it passed into the repertoire of Edgar
 Waters, the Australian ballad collector, who
 brought it to England and taught it to Shirley
 Collins. My guess is that from her record it will
 pass into the repertoire of the young folk singers
 on this continent.

My name is Denis O'Reilly,
 From Dublin Town I come,
 To travel the wide world over
 I crossed the Australian Main.

CHORUS:
 With me pack all on my shoulder,
 And a blackthorn in my hand,
 I'll travel the bush of Australia
 Like a true-born Irishman.

Now when I arrived in Melbourne
 The girls all jumped for joy,
 Saying one unto another,
 "Here comes an Irish boy."

(CHORUS)

"Now daughter, dearest daughter,
 What is it you would do?
 Now would you marry an Irish man,
 A man you never knew?"
 "O mother, dear mother,
 I'll do the best I can,
 I'll travel the wide world over
 With that true born Irishman."

(CHORUS)

SIDE I, Band 5: MY BONNY MINER LAD

(Cosgrove-Lloyd). Anyone who knows the books
 and records of Ewan McColl and A.L. Lloyd
 realizes that folk-song-making did not cease with
 the advent of the industrial revolution in Great
 Britain. The country people, re-worked their
 traditional songs or composed new pieces to tell
 of their struggles and to celebrate their grimy-
 handed heroes. Some of these industrial ballads
 have been in circulation for more than a century,
 have been varied in the traditional folk
 manner, and rank with the best of the British
 song tradition. The oldest and most productive
 of these industrial folk traditions is that of
 the miners, of which A.L. Lloyd has made a
 superlative collection. One of his informants
 was the Scots miner's wife, daughter of several
 generations of miners, Mrs. Cosgrove of
 Keltinrove in the Lowlands of Scotland. I had
 the pleasure on one occasion of hearing Mrs.
 Cosgrove singing in her own house, as she fixed
 a midnight snack for her men-folks who were
 going down on the night shift, and told stories
 of mining disasters and strikes. I can testify
 that her style and her point of view are those
 of a true folk singer. This song has been collected
 in another form among the Scots coal miners of Nova
 Scotia.

O bonny's my lad as he walks down the street,
 His cap in his hand so dainty and neat;
 His teeth white as ivory, his eyes black as sloes,
 I love my miner lad, everyone knows.

When I have money he has his part,
 And when I've none he has my heart.
 He gained it, too, with a free good will,
 And I'll confess I love him still.

I'll build him a palace of great renown,
 No lords nor kings can e'er pull it down,
 For the king has his true love, the lord the same,
 And I love my miner lad. Who can me blame?

SIDE I, Band 6: JUST AS THE TIDE WAS FLOWING

(arr. Collins) is a fragment of a folksy ballad,
 almost certainly of literary origin, found in
 various parts of England by Sharp, Kidson and
 Collinson, learned by Miss Collins from her
 mother's sister, Grace Winborn of Hastings in
 Sussex.

One morning in the month of May
 When all the birds were singing.
 I saw a lovely lady stray
 Across the fields at break of day,
 And softly sang a roundelay -
 "The tide flows in, the tide flows out,
 Twice every day returning."

A sailor's wife at home must bide,
 She halted, heavily she sighed.
 "He parted from me, me a bride,
 Just as the tide was flowing.
 The tide flows in, the tide flows out,
 Twice every day returning."

SIDE I, Band 7: BOBBY SHAFTOE

one of the best known British folk songs, is
 here sung with vigor and snap as it was when
 John Stokoe found it in Northern England. In
 the North the tune has long been played for
 country dancing. What one usually hears is a
 sentimentalized, slowed-down reworking of the
 song, from which all the Northern dialect has
 been deleted, along with the child which the
 girl friend is carrying against Bobby Shaftoe's
 return.

Bobby Shaftoe's gone to sea,
 Silver buckles on his knee,
 He'll come back and marry me,
 Bonny Bobby Shaftoe.

Bobby Shaftoe's neat and slim,
 He's always dressed so fine and trim,
 The lassies they all keek at him,
 Bonny Bobby Shaftoe.

Bobby Shaftoe's getting a bairn,
 For to dandle on his arm.
 On his arm and on his knee,
 Bonnie Bobby Shaftoe.

Bobby Shaftoe's fat and fair,
 Combing down his yellow hair,
 He's my love for ever mair,
 Bonny Bobby Shaftoe.

Bobby Shaftoe's been to sea,
 Silver buckles on his knee,
 He's come back and married me,
 Bonny Bobbie Shaftoe.

SIDE I, Band 8: RICHIE STORY

(or the Earl of Weymss) (arr. McColl) is a rare
 ballad published by Child as No. 232 of his
 collection, English and Scottish Popular Ballads.
 According to his note, the ballad is based in
 history. Lillias Fleming, daughter of John, third
 earl of Wigton, ran away with and married one of
 her father's servants, Richard Story, and in
 1673 she resigned her portion of the family land.
 In all but one of the Child versions Lillias
 seems satisfied with the choice she has made,
 but in that one Richard turns out to be an Earl
 in disguise. The present variant comes from Ewan
 McColl, who learned it from his Scots father and
 from Hughie Grahame of Newton Stuart, Calloway,
 and added supplementary text from a variant in Gavin
 Grieg's collection. Here, where romanticism has
 a field day, we discover that Richard is really
 the King of England!

Here's a letter to you, Madam,
 Here's a letter to you, Madam,
 Here's a letter from the Earl of the Wemyss
 And it's all in suit of you, Madam.

Say not so to me, Richard (2)
 For I've made a vow, and I swear I'll be true,
 To marry none but you, Richard.

Say not so to me, Madam. (2)
 For I have neither lands nor rents
 For to maintain ye with, Madam.

Now I am going away, Madam. (2)
 I'm going away to London town,
 My friends they long to see me, Madam.

Then I will go with you, Richard, (2)
 I'll go with you to London Town,
 I'll go across the sea, Richard.

When they went down through London Town,
 O but the bells were ringing bonnie,
 And many-a one did look at them,
 And little did they think it was Richard's lady.

When they came in at the Parliament Gate,
 The marriage bells were ringing bonnie,
 And many a knight, and many a squire
 Stood there to welcome Richard's lady.

When they came in at the Parliament Gate,
 The marriage bells were ringing bonnie,
 And many a knight, and many a squire
 Stood there to welcome Richard's lady

So dearly as you loved me, Madam, (2)
 You left your lands and all your rents,
 Your serving-man to go with, Madam.
 But so dearly as I loved you, Madam, (2)
 I left the sceptre and the throne
 And was your waiting man, Madam.

And was your waiting man, Madam,
 Made all your cridles ring, Madam.
 And little did you think that your waiting boy

Was England's royal king, Madam.
 But since it's so ye loved me, Madam, (2)
 You shall be Queen of all England,
 And happy shall ye be, Madam.

SIDE I, Band 9: THE UNQUIET GRAVE

from Cecil Sharp's English Folk Songs, Novello.
 This is one of the classic pieces of English folk song literature. From one point of view it is a feminine fantasy or a wish, perhaps for the death of the lover, perhaps for a way of arranging a night visit by the lover, perhaps for a way of showing how strong her love is, perhaps of a feeling of guilt. Certainly, it is a ghost story designed to delight the imagination of young women. Finally, it shows the survival of ancient and widely distributed primitive beliefs about the treatment of the dead.

The rowdy Irish wake is the only one example of the common folk custom of a gathering in which ceremonial banqueting and games were indulged in to show honor to the dead person. The shade was given a great send-off to the other world. Sometimes guns were fired to send him skittering away in fear. Sometimes a special door was cut in the side of the wall so that the coffin could be taken out by that route; and then this hole was walled up so that the ghost could not find his way back into the house again.

In Scotland and Ireland it was believed that excessive grief prevented the dead from resting; that the tears shed by the mourners pierced holes in the corpse. In Persia they held that the tears shed by humanity for their dead flowed into a river in which the souls floated and drowned. Similar beliefs were held by the Greeks and Romans, and from medieval times throughout Germany and Scandinavia.

Sharp says that in England a belief was current that if a girl was betrothed to a man, she was pledged to him if he died, and was bound to follow him to the spirit world unless she solved certain riddles, or performed certain tasks, such as fetching water from a desert, blood from a stone, milk from the breast of a virgin...

Cold blows the wind tonight, true love,
 Cold are the drops of rain,
 I never had but one true love,
 And in greenwood he lies slain.

I'll do as much for my true love,
 As any young girl may.
 I'll sit and mourn all on his grave
 For a twelve-month and a day.

The twelve-month and the day being gone,
 The ghost began to greet.
 "Your salted tears they trickle down,
 They wet my winding sheet."

"It's I, my love, sits by your grave
 And will not let you sleep,
 For I crave one kiss of your clay cold lips,
 And that is all I seek."

"O lily, lily are my lips.
 My breath comes earthy strong.
 If you have one kiss of my clay cold lips,
 Your time will not be long."

"'Twas down in yonder garden green
 Love, where we used to walk,
 The fairest flower that ever was seen
 Is withered to the stalk.

"The stalk is withered dry, my love,
 So must our hearts decay;
 Then rest yourself content, my love,
 Till God calls you away.

SIDE II, Band 1: THE SWAPPING SONG

from Cecil Sharp's English Folk Songs for Schools, Novello's, is common in England and in America as well.

My father died and I can't tell how,
 He left me six horses to follow the plough.

CHORUS:
 With a wim-wim-wobble-o,
 Strim-strim-strobbles-o,
 Bubble-o, pretty boy, over the brow.

So I sold the horses and bought a cow,
 But how for to milk her I didn't know how.

So I sold the cow and bought a calf.
 I never make a bargain but I lose the better half.

I sold the calf and bought a cat,
 And the pretty little thing in the chimney
 corner sat.

I sold the cat and bought a mouse,
 It set fire to its tail and burnt down my house.

SIDE II, Band 2: POOR OLD HORSE

from Cecil Sharp's Folk Songs of England, Novello's, is a landlubber relative of the familiar sea shantey,

Say, old man, your horse will die,
 And I say so and I hope so,
 And if he dies I'll sell his skin,
 Poor old horse.

There can be no doubt that the land-variant, which Sharp found as a part of the hobby-horse drama in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire, is older by far. The hobby horse, an important actor in British springtime ceremonies, is a fantastic and sometimes terrifying mask which covers the entire body of the dancer. The horse-dancer goes the round of the community, often on May Day, alternately dying and being revived by his companions, symbolizing the death of the old year and the renewal of the year, and of the fertility of the earth. These spring-time antics of the hobby-horse, which still amuse tourists in certain remote districts of western England, are a genuine survival of ancient pagan fertility rites. That a horse-mask dances in Britain on May Day is one more evidence of the importance of the horse-cult, widespread in all Europe thousands of years ago. Therefore, this charming little comic fragment, which Sharp had taught to all the school children in Britain, is a gentle breath of a pagan fertility rite that once upon a time was a compound of magic, religion, comedy and sex.

My clothing was once of a linsey-woolsey fine,
 My mane it was sleek and my body it did shine.
 But now I'm getting old and I'm going to decay,
 My master frowns upon me and thus they all do say,
 "Poor Old Horse."

My living was once of the best of corn and hay
 As ever grew in Eng-a-land, and that they all do say.
 But now there's no such comfort as I can find at all.
 I'm forced to nab the short grass that grows against
 the wall,
 "Poor Old Horse."

SIDE II, Band 3: THE FALSE TRUE LOVE

(from Vol. II, English Folk Songs of the Southern Appalachians, Cecil Sharp) is one of hundreds of examples showing that the British folk song tradition has grown steadily more lyrical in the past two or three hundred years. As the role of the

ballad singer lost its importance, the narrative pieces were broken down into fragmentary lyric songs. This process has been especially marked and rapid in the Southern Appalachian area, from which this song comes.

The original piece is a tragic ballad, called Young Hunting (Child 68), probably Scots in origin, but widespread throughout Britain and the North America. It tells of a young man who rides by to visit an old sweetheart. When she bids him to light down and spend the night, he says that he prefers his new light of love. Whereupon the jealous girl stabs him, throws his corpse into the well and curses him. The remainder of the ballad consists of a dialogue between the murderess and her little parrot, the sole witness, who insists he will tell all and will not be bribed or threatened into silence.

All that is left of this story in the Tennessee lyric form is the opening bit of dialogue. Moreover, the situation has been so generalized that either part may be taken by a man or a woman, and there is no hint of violence. The song dwells upon the faithlessness of lovers, and the tragic position of the betrayed one, twin themes which are paramount in American erotic folk poetry. In the view of an academic critic such as Louise Pound the shortening of the ballad into the lyric song represents merely a decay in the folk tradition. Perhaps she would not hold to this opinion if she could hear the song as it is actually sung. One can say no more than this; at one time there was a fine ballad and later it gave rise to an equally beautiful lyric piece.

Come in, come in, my old true love,
And chat awhile with me,
For it's been three-quarters of a long year or more
Since I spoke one word to thee.

I can't come in, I shan't set down,
I don't have a moment's time.
Since you are engaged with another true love,
Then your heart is no longer mine.

But when you were mine, my old true love,
And your head lay on my breast.
You could make me believe by the falling of your
arm,
That the sun rose up in the west.
Once my true love courted me
And stole away my liberty.
He gained my heart with a free good will,
And I'll confess I love him still.

O there's an ale-house in the town,
Where my love goes and sits him down,
He takes a strange girl on his knee,
And isn't that a grief to me.

There is a bird in yon church-yard,
They say he's blind, and cannot see,
I wish it had been the same with me,
Before I kept my love's company.

I wish, I wish, but it's all in vain,
I wish I were but free again,
But free again I'll never be,
Since I have kept my love's company.

I wish my baby it was born
And sitting on his daddy's knee,
And me, poor girl, was dead and gone,
With the green grass growing over me.

SIDE II, Band 4: THE FOGGY DEW

(from Vol. II, Sharp's *English Folk Songs of the Southern Appalachians*) is one of the few of the frankly erotic songs so common in Southern England to survive more or less uncensored in American tradition. Its center of dispersal seems to have been the Suffolk-Norfolk area, where it still can be heard being roared out in remote country pubs ...

And ev-er-y time she cocks her leg,
I thinks of the fe--o---ggy de-ew.

This ribald variant has been frequently broadcast over the BBC, which in spite of its occasional stodginess, makes our American radio and television networks seem old-midish. However, Miss Collins prefers the version that Sharp found in Calloway, Virginia. I quote her ...

I think that this is the most beautiful version of the song to be found anywhere. To me, it's the only version that doesn't have a sneer behind it; it's truly tender and loving. But James Reeves, the author of "The Idiom of the People," says, "It has a rough coherence, but surely none of the subtlety or the emotional and psychological interest of English versions." - and "It is an example of the hopeless confusion resulting from evident misunderstanding of traditional symbolism." However, I'm sure for girls everywhere, the Virginian variant wins hands down...

I courted her all of the winter,
Part of the summer too,
All the harm that I have done,
Was to court a pretty fair miss.

One night she came to my bedside
As I lay fast asleep.
"Oh come to my arms, my pretty miss,
Get out of the foggy dew."

She stayed in my arms till broad daylight,
The sun began to shine.
I turned my back on my own true love,
"Goodbye, my love, I'm gone."

Towards the first part of the year
She took pale in the face.
Towards the end part of that year
She grew bigger around the waist.

Along towards the end of the year,
She brought me a son.
"It's now you see as well as I
What the foggy dew has done."

I loved that girl with all my heart,
Long as I loved my life.
And in the end part of that year
I made her my lawful wife.

I never held it up to her,
Never in my life.
Yet every time the baby cries,
I'd think on the foggy dew.

SIDE II, Band 5: MOWING THE BARLEY

(from Sharp's *English Folk Songs*, Novello's), often called *Lawyer Lee*, may be a lyricized variant of *The Baffled Knight*, in which a clever girl outwits her would-be seducer and keeps her maidenhead. In this Southern English variant, however, the virgin seems to have wearied in the chase. Miss Collins learned the song from her mother, and is not sure whether it derives from Sharp or not.

"Where are you going to, my pretty dear,
Where are you going, my honey?"
"Over the meadows kind sir," she said,
"To my father mowing the barley."

"May I go with you, my pretty dear,
May I go with you, my honey?"
"Yes, if you like, kind sir," she said,
"To my father mowing the barley."

The lawyer told a story bold
Together they were going.
Till she quite forgot the barley field
And left her father mowing.

And now she is the lawyer's wife
And dearly the lawyer loves her.
She's living a happy, contented life,
Well into a station above her.

SIDE II, Band 6: SCARBOROUGH FAIR

(derived by McColl from Cecil Sharp's *English Folk Songs*, Novello's) is a fragment of and extremely ancient ballad (Child No. 2, *The Elfin Knight*), common in all areas of Britain and North America. In the original song a girl hears the far-off blast of the elfin knight's horn and wishes he were in her bedroom. He straightway appears, but will not consent to be her lover until she answers a series of riddles. This trait of test-by-riddle is a heritage from remote antiquity. The survival of this ancient piece of folklore is assured by the fact that all the

couplets in this song contain gentle, but evocative erotic symbols.

Are you going to Scarborough Fair?
Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme.
Remember me to one who lives there,
For once he was a true love of mine.

REFRAIN:

Tell him to make me a cambric shirt,
Without a seam or needlework,
And he shall be a true love of mine.

Tell him to wash it in yonder dry well,
Where water ne'er sprang, nor drop of rain fell.

Tell him to hang it on yonder dry thorn,
Which never bore blossom since Adam was born.

O can you find me an acre of land
Between the sea foam and the sea sand?

SIDE II, Band 7: THE CRUEL MOTHER

(Coll. and arr. McColl) known throughout Great Britain and North America, reminds us of one of the commonest crimes traditional in our culture---infanticide. In the older forms found in Child (No. 20) the girl kills her three illegitimate babes because she is planning to marry and wishes to appear at her wedding as a virgin. However, one of the children remains alive and begs a passer-by to take him to the wedding, where he denounces his mother. Thereupon, she is carried off to hell.

The present version comes from Ewan McColl, who learned the tune from his mother, Betsy Miller, completing it from the Grieg collection. In common with the women who have treasured this song over the centuries Miss Collins says, "While I feel sorry for the murdered babes, my deep sympathy lies with the poor mother."

A minister's daughter in the North,
Hey the rose and the lindsay-o.
She's fallen in love with her father's clerk,
Down by the greenwood side-i-o.

He courted her a year and a day,
Till her the young man did betray.

She leaned her back against a tree,
And there the tear did blind her eye.

She leaned her back against a thorn,
And there two bonny boys she has born.

She's taken out her little pen-knife,
And she has twined them of their life.

She laid them beneath a marble stone,
Thinking to go a maiden home.

As she looked over her father's wall
She saw her two bonny boys playing ball.

"O bonny boys, if you were mine,
I would dress you in silk so fine."

"O cruel mother, when we were thine,
We didn't see aught of your silk so fine."

"Now bonny boys come tell to me,
What sort of death I'll have to die."

"Seven years a fish in the flood,
And seven years a bird in the wood."

"Seven years a tongue in the warning bell,
And seven years in the flames of hell."

"Welcome, welcome, fish in the flood,
And welcome, welcome bird in the wood."

"Welcome, tongue to the warning bell,
But God keep me from the flames of hell."

SIDE II, Band 8: THE BONNY CUCKOO

(published in the Clarendon Song Book, Oxford University Press and learnt by the Misses Collins in their school choir in Hastings) is perhaps the most charming of the many songs which celebrate the cuckoo, the harbinger of spring and the natural symbol of cuckolds.

My Bonny Cuckoo, I tell thee true
That through the groves I'll rove with you.
I'll rove with you until the next spring,
And then my cuckoo shall sweetly sing.

The ash and the hazel shall mourning say,
O bonny cuckoo, don't go away.
Don't go away but tarry here,
And make the spring last all the year.
Don't go away but tarry here,
And sing for us throughout the year.

SIDE II, Band 9: THE QUEEN OF MAY

(from Sharp's English Folk Songs, Novello's) tells the second part of the story introduced by My Bonny Cuckoo. When the cry of the cuckoo echoed through the meadows on the eve of the first of May, the young men and women went out together to gather May blossoms and to make love among the springtime blossoms. So deep-rooted was this pagan fertility practice that Protestant ministers were still unsuccessfully trying to eradicate it late in the 19th century. The feeling still lingers in rural England, especially in the lyric songs. It was a misfortune that prudery was at its height. At the time Cecil Sharp was collecting and publishing, fifty years ago. In order to be able to introduce his folk-song finds into the school system, he was forced to bowdlerize the texts and to transform many innocently erotic but extremely beautiful songs into the pallid, sentimental pieces which finally turned many Brirons against folk music. This, I feel sure, is one of the songs Sharp had to censor. What really happened that May Day morning under the oak tree was probably not legalized in the original folk version that Sharp collected. Of course, it is not possible for an American to cast stones in regard to censorship, for today American school text book editors behave far more prudishly than did Sharp, and poor Baring-Gould in the worst years of the mauve decade.

As I was a-walking to take the fresh air,
The flowers all blooming and gay,
I heard a young damsel so sweetly a-singing,
Her cheeks like the flowers in May.

I said, "Pretty maiden, may I go with you,
Through the flowers to gather some may?"
The maid she replied, "My path it is here,
I pray you pursue your own way."

So she tripped along with her dear little feet,
But I followed, and soon I drew nigh
I called her my pretty, my true love so sweet,
So she took me at last for her dear.

I took the fair maid by the lily-white hand,
On a green mossy bank we sat down;
I gave her a kiss on her sweet rosy lips,
A tree spread its branches around.

Now when we did rise from that sweet mossy grove,
In the meadows we wandered away,
And I sat my true love on a primrose bank,
And I picked her a handful of May.

The very next morning I made her my bride,
Just after the breaking of day;
The bells they did ring, and the birds they did sing,
As I made her my Queen of sweet May.

SIDE II, Band 10: DIED FOR LOVE

(From Traditional Tunes, by Frank Kidson arr. Collins) is perhaps the most beautiful of the many variants of this important British folk song, most familiar to us as The Butcher's Boy or There is a Tavern in the Town, or in Woody Guthrie's Hard, Aint It Hard. This Northern English variant points to one of the most important differences between British and American love-songs. Typically in the English love song there is an amorous encounter between a young man and the young woman, and though the girl is often betrayed, she expresses in her song a trace of the real pleasure that she experienced. Even more importantly, she has a baby; and, through her melancholy, there lingers note of procreative joy. Very frequently in these songs the boy returns to marry her when he discovers that she is about to bear him a child. American singers were more prudish; they censored out the pregnancy theme; and the betrayed girl was left to brood over the transiency of love and sigh for death to heal her heartbreak.