

*Marching Across the Green Grass  
and other  
American Children Game Songs  
by Jean Ritchie*

*Asch Records AH 752*  
FOLKWAYS RECORDS FC 7702



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Asch Records AH 752

FOLKWAYS FC 7702

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

PHOTOGRAPH BY GEORGE PICKOW

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RY  
F ALBERTA

## Marching Across The Green Grass

SIDE I Band 1. Sailor, Sailor on the Sea. Words and Music by Jean Ritchie.

To play the game, children stand in a large circle formation, as "farmers," with one chosen to be in the middle, as the "sailor." In his hand, he has concealed a number (one to five) of small objects--pebbles, pennies, bits of chalk or crayon, as "treasures." All children in the circle sing the first verse as the "sailor" walks or skips around the inside of the circle. At the end of the line, "What treasures have you brought to me?" the sailor stops and faces the child he is nearest, extends his closed hand and sings the second verse (others help him sing if he needs it), then says, "Guess how many!" The farmer he is facing guesses, and, if he is right, he collects all the treasure, decides how many he wants to hide in his own hand, and becomes the "sailor," while the original sailor joins the circle as a farmer as the others sing, "You have guessed the number true... etc." If he has not guessed correctly, the sailor sings, "You have missed the number plain... etc." and he has another turn, and another, until someone guesses correctly.

Sailor, sailor on the sea,  
Sailor, sailor on the sea,  
Sailor, sailor on the sea,  
What treasures have you brought to me?  
Farmer, farmer on the land,  
Farmer, farmer on the land,  
Farmer, farmer on the land,  
I've golden jewels in my hand.

Sailor speaks: Guess How many.

Farmer guesses: Three? (Whatever number he wishes)

You have guessed the number true,  
You have guessed the number true,  
You have guessed the number true,  
Now you may sail the ocean blue.

(Or)

You have missed the number plain,  
You have missed the number plain,  
You have missed the number plain,  
So I must sail the seas again.

Band 2. Pussy Got the Measles. Geordie Music Publishing, Inc.

This lullaby song is adapted from a very sad little Irish lament. In the original, the kitten dies, gets nailed into a coffin, wrapped in linen, and buried. My own children would not accept this outcome, so in our song, we nurse poor Pussy and make her well, and all feel extremely comforted.

Pussy got the measles, on the first day of spring,  
The first day of spring, the first day of spring,  
Pussy got the measles on the first day of spring,  
The poor, the poor, the poor wee thing.

We'll send for the doctor with his pills and things,  
Pills and things, pills and things,  
We'll send for the doctor with his pills and things,  
The poor, the poor, the poor wee thing.

We'll make her some soup on a chicken's wing,  
A chicken's wing, a chicken's wing,  
We'll make her some soup on a chicken's wing,  
The poor, the poor, the poor wee thing.

And all night long we will rock and sing,  
Rock and sing, rock and sing,  
And all night long we will rock and sing,  
The poor, the poor, the poor wee thing.

Band 3. Train A-Comin. Words and Music by Jean Ritchie.

All little boys love trains, and my sons Jon and Peter, heard joining in the chorus, are no exceptions. Here is a train song which I made up just for them.

### CHORUS

Chug-a-lug-a-lug and a toot, toot, toot,  
Chug-a-lug-a-lug and a toot, toot, toot,  
Chug-a-lug-a-lug and a toot, toot, toot,  
I hear that train a-comin'.

Little old engine sure can roll,  
Little old engine sure can roll,  
Little old engine sure can roll,  
She drinks water, she eats coal. (Chorus)

I stand on the hill and I wave my hand,  
I stand on the hill and I wave my hand,  
I stand on the hill and I wave my hand,  
I want to ride with the railroad man. (Chorus)

I wish I was in that red caboose,  
I wish I was in that red caboose,  
I wish I was in that red caboose,  
And they never would turn me loose. (Chorus)

There she goes round the bend,  
There she goes round the bend,  
There she goes round the bend,  
Tomorrow she'll come back again. (Chorus)

Band 4. Shady Grove. Geordie Music Publishing Inc.

This version of "Shady Grove" is based on an old Southern Mountain banjo- or fiddle-learning piece. Everybody who played the song made up words. I heard verses from my father, my sister, and myself filled in a few of the lines and added the chorus. Here I play it on the three-stringed Appalachian Dulcimer, as I learned from my father in Viper, Kentucky.

Cheeks as red as the blooming rose,  
Eyes of deepest brown,  
You are the darling of my heart,  
Stay till sun goes down.

#### CHORUS

Shady grove my little love,  
Shady grove I know,  
Shady grove my little love,  
Bound for the shady grove.

Went to see my shady grove,  
She was standing in the door,  
Shoes and stockings in her hands,  
Little bare feet on the floor. (Chorus)

Wish I had a big fine horse,  
Corn to feed him on,  
Pretty little girls stay at home,  
Feed him when I'm gone. (Chorus)

#### Band 5. Marching Across the Green Grass. Traditional.

Most of the songs which I sing have come to me through my family and other associations with the Kentucky Mountains, but this version of, "Here Come Two Dukes A-Riding," is very different from the way my mother sings it. When I first went to New York City to work, I was taken to WNYC to attend an Oscar Brand (Your Folk Song Festival) broadcast. I sang for Oscar and soon became a regular performer on the program. Occasionally we would sing an "answer-back" song, and once in awhile, Oscar would get stubborn and insist on singing his version of this game, which he learned as a child in Canada. After a time, I got to like it, and I have passed it along, with Mom Ritchie's "Two Dukes," to my own offspring. Peter sings it with me on this recording. It is a game song, played with the two chosen sides taking turns, as they sing their verses, marching towards each other and back to place (holding hands in a long line, facing the opposite line). At the end, when one is chosen, that one becomes the chooser's partner for the next game. One good variation on the game that makes it more fun, is to have the chooser and the chosen do a tug-o-war across a chalk line drawn in the center; the one who pulls the other over taking the captive back into his own line.

Marching across the green grass  
The green grass, the green grass  
Marching across the green grass  
On a husky dusky day.

What are you marching here for  
Here for, Here for,  
What are you marching here for  
On a husky dusky day?

We're marching here to get married  
Married, married,  
We're marching here to get married  
On a husky dusky day.

How you going to get us  
Get us, get us?  
How you going to get us  
On a husky dusky day?

We'll come down the chimney  
The chimney, the chimney,  
We'll come down the chimney  
On a husky dusky day.  
We'll light up the chimney  
The chimney, the chimney,  
We'll light up the chimney  
On a husky dusky day.

We'll come through the window  
The window, the window,  
We'll come through the window  
On a husky dusky day.

We'll lock up the window  
The window, the window,  
We'll lock up the window  
On a husky dusky day.

Marching across the green grass  
The green grass, the green grass,  
Marching across the green grass  
On a husky dusky day.

#### Band 6. All Little Ones are Sleeping. Words and Music by Jean Ritchie.

Nighttime in the still, dark Kentucky Mountains found everything sleeping, except for a few hoot-owls and frogs. It used to make me feel good, when I curled up in my warm bed, to think of all the other little creatures, those with feathers and fur, sleeping safe in their own chosen nests. It is a very thankful feeling.

All through the night, all through the night  
All little ones are sleeping.  
All through the night, all through the night  
All little ones are sleeping.  
In a hole down underground  
Little rabbits may be found.  
All through the night, all through the night  
All little ones are sleeping.

All through the night, all through the night  
All little ones are sleeping  
(Hum repeat)  
Sparrow sleeps up in a tree  
My warm bed is best for me!  
All through the night, all through the night  
All little ones are sleeping.

All through the night, all through the night  
All little ones are sleeping  
(Hum repeat)  
God bless babes and beast and birds,  
All small things that have no words.  
All through the night, all through the night  
All little ones are sleeping.

#### Band 7. Hunt the Cows. Words and Music by Jean Ritchie.

Mornings and evenings, one of my main jobs used to be hunting the cows. Almost before daylight, I'd have to crawl out of my warm bed, before breakfast, go high up into the misty and mysterious pasture field, and listen for the bells of the cows.



I'd call, in the direction of the distant bells, "Soo-ook! Soo-ook!" They would start to pick their way down the hillside, but there was always one young heifer who wouldn't come, and I'd have to climb up, find her, and drive her down with the others to the barn to be milked. On summer afternoons, hunting the cows was another matter. There was not the fresh cool dew under my bare toes, but the sun was hot and the cows so far away that not even the sound of a bell could be heard. Too hot to walk up the mountain, searching, but just nice for resting near a blackberry bush, calling the cows occasionally, and hoping that they would realize what time it was and come home by themselves. It was the memory of these times that caused me, much later, to sing this game with my children.

All the players join hands and step-hop (a kind of a slow, bouncy skip) or jump around to the left as the music leader starts the song:

"Wake up, you lazy bones and go and  
hunt the cattle,  
Wake up, you lazybones and go and  
hunt the cows!  
Wake up, you lazybones and go and  
hunt the cattle,  
Wake up, you lazybones and go and  
hunt the cows!"

On the line, "The cows are lost," all stop skipping and go down onto one knee. On the line, "The sun is warm," all go down onto second knee. On the line, "I think I'll rest," all go on down and rest on one elbow. On the line, "Till they come home," all go on down on second elbow. Hold this position until the music leader decides to start the song from the beginning. As she sings, "Wake up, you lazybones..." all leap up, join hands and circle left. The game may be played as many times as the children like, with the most fun being the suspense when all are down on knees and elbows, not knowing just when the leaping-up time will be. After the game is introduced, the children can take turns themselves being the music leader.

#### Band 8. Goin to Boston

When my mother was a girl, dancing was considered a sin in the countryside, so the boys and girls made up musical games, with swing-your-partner (two-hand swing, though, not round the waist!), rights-and-lefts, sashay-down-the-middle, and other steps borrowed from the forbidden squares and set-dances. As long as no musical instruments were used, it wasn't sinful! The actual form of the game is too complicated for little children, so I won't give directions here. But I remember going to Saturday night play-parties when I was too little to join in when the older ones played, "Boston." What would happen is that all the little ones would get together over in a corner, with a Mommie or an older sister, or just by ourselves, and we'd make up our own steps, and have every bit as much fun as the others. I thought that children hearing this song might like to do the same thing.

Goodbye girls I'm going to Boston  
Goodbye girls I'm going to Boston

Goodbye girls I'm going to Boston  
Early in the morning.

#### CHORUS

Won't we look pretty in the ballroom  
Won't we look pretty in the ballroom  
Won't we look pretty in the ballroom  
Early in the morning.

Saddle up girls and let's go with them  
Saddle up girls and let's go with them  
Saddle up girls and let's go with them  
Early in the morning. (Chorus)

Rights and lefts, make it better  
Rights and lefts, make it better  
Rights and lefts, make it better  
Early in the morning. (Chorus)

Swing your partner all the way to Boston  
Swing your partner all the way to Boston  
Swing your partner all the way to Boston  
Early in the morning. (Chorus)

Johnny, Johnny going to tell your pappy  
Johnny, Johnny going to tell your pappy  
Johnny, Johnny going to tell your pappy  
Early in the morning.

#### CHORUS

Won't we look pretty in the ballroom  
Won't we look pretty in the ballroom  
Won't we look pretty in the ballroom  
Early in the morning.

#### SIDE II Band 1. All Ye Jolly Huntsmen. Geordie Music Publishing, Inc.

The first time I heard a version of this song was from an Irish chambermaid, in Dublin. She was about sixteen, small and very shy. Years later, having been sung over and added to by my family and myself, it is considerably changed, but still Irish in flavor.

Come all you jolly huntsmen  
Who want to hunt the fox.  
Where shall we find him?  
Among the hills and rocks.

#### CHORUS

Tally-Ho, Tally-Ho pursue him!  
The huntsman loudly cried.  
A-Hi-Li, A-Hi-Lo  
And a down the woods we glide.

The first we met was a blacksmith  
And he was very black  
He said he saw poor Reynard  
A-crossin' the railroad track. (Chorus)

The next we met was a miller  
A-grindin' of his corn  
He said he saw poor Reynard  
A-blowin' a shepherds horn. (Chorus)

Band 2. The Bluebird Song. Geordie Music  
Publishing, Inc.

There is a bird-counting rhyme that we used, in our growing days in Kentucky, to tell our fortunes. Any birds could be counted, but bluebirds were the luckiest, folks said. This is the way it's done: Wait until two or more birds alight together in a tree, then begin to recite the rhyme, counting one bird for each line of poetry. Since the rhyme goes only to nine, if there are more than nine birds, start again at, "One, you'll have sorrow..." When the birds fly from the tree, the line you are saying or singing at that moment will be your fortune. One day, when my sons were small, I was telling them about the time I counted bluebirds in our apple tree, and, before the telling of it was over, we had shaped the story into a song. It's a good song just for singing, or resting, or listening quietly, or rocking someone.

When I was a young thing, once on a day  
Dreaming under my apple tree,  
A great flock of bluebirds sailing through the sky  
Espied my tree as they passed by.  
When they settled down to rest in my apple tree!  
Count them, said my mother, How? said I-  
Out of the window came this reply:

CHORUS

One, you'll have sorrow,  
Two, you'll have joy,  
Three, get a present,  
Four, get a boy,  
Five, receive silver,  
Six, receive gold,  
Seven, a secret that's never been told,  
Eight, a love letter with promises three,  
Nine, means your true love's as can be.

Only once in a lifetime, the old folks say,  
The vision of the bluebirds will come your way-  
But only if you're dreaming, only if you're still,  
Only in an apple tree on a green hill.  
So stop all your hurrying and worrying away,  
And take time for dreaming on a sunny day-  
Wait for the bluebirds and when they come along,  
Tell your fortune with the bluebird song. (Chorus)

Band 3. King Quine Song. Geordie Music  
Publishing, Inc.

On the schoolyard at morning recess, my friends and I liked to improvise instruments (for instance, two sticks became a fiddle) and act out this song in our own way. We went to a two-room school--primer through third grades in one room with the "Little-room teacher," and the fourth through eighth grades in the other room with the principal. Our schoolhouse was a small white frame building with a bell tower in front, and it was bounded on one side by the river and a long mountain ridge, and on the other side by the county road, the L&N tracks and another long mountain ridge. Our playground was yellow dirt, hard-packed and smooth, and around the edges were grass and daisies and trees... So, we really were "under the greenwood tree" when we play-acted old King Quine. I have learned since, however, that he is equally at home on a concrete playground, or in a quiet schoolroom corner!

Old King Quine he sent for his wine,  
He sent for his fiddlers three.  
Every diffler fiddled wo well under the greenwood tree.

See-Saw-Saw went the fiddlers-O!  
See-Saw-Saw went the fiddlers-O!  
We'll all feel fine if we take a little wine  
And fiddle with old King Quine.

Old King Quine sent for his wine,  
He sent for his pipers three.  
Every piper piped so well under the greenwood tree.

Tweedle-Tweedle-O went the pipers-O!  
Tweedle-Tweedle-O went the pipers-O!  
We'll all feel fine if we take a little wine  
And pipe with old King Quine.

Old King Quine he sent for his wine,  
He sent for his harpers three.  
Every harper harped so well under the greenwood tree.

Cling-Cling-Clang went the harpers-O!  
Cling-Cling-Clang went the harpers-O!  
We'll all feel fine if we take a little wine  
And harp with old King Quine.

Old King Quine he sent for his wine,  
He sent for his dancers three.  
Every dancer danced so well under the greenwood tree.

Round-to-my-round went the dancers-O!  
Round-to-my-round went the dancers-O!  
We'll all feel fine if we take a little wine  
And dance with old King Quine.

Band 4. Open the Window. Geordie Music  
Publishing, Inc.

I heard the first verse of this song from a lovely Irish grandmother, Mrs. Elisabeth Cronin, who lived in County Cork, near Macroom. She called it "a dandling song," meaning a bit of nonsense sung to a baby being dandled on the knee. When I took the song home, we added verses and made the "open the window" part the chorus, and if we felt like it, the boys and girls could divide up on the verses. It's a good performance song, too; if any child likes to blow a whistle, or beat a drum, or anything else special, he can play a solo (or they can all play together) after each chorus, where the song says: "Open the window, do, Love, do, Listen to the music playing for you."

I have a bonnet trimmed in blue.  
Why don't you wear it? So I do.  
I have a bonnet trimmed in blue.  
Why don't you wear it? So I do.

CHORUS

Open the window, do love do,  
Listen to the music playing for you!  
Open the window, do love do,  
Listen to the music playing for you!

I have a jacket trimmed in brown,  
I'll put it on when the sun goes down.  
I have a jacket trimmed in brown,  
I'll put it on when the sun goes down. (Chorus)



I have a dress all trimmed in green,  
 Prettiest thing you've ever seen.  
 I have a dress all trimmed in green,  
 Prettiest thing you've ever seen. (Chorus)

I have a tall hat trimmed in red,  
 Madam, would you like to wed?  
 I have a tall hat trimmed in red,  
 Madam, would you like to wed? (Chorus)

I have shoes all trimmed in white,  
 I'll get married on Saturday night.  
 I have shoes all trimmed in white,  
 I'll get married on Saturday night. (Chorus)

Band 5. Old Raggy. Words, Music by  
 Jean Ritchie.

Many games that I remember from my girlhood had as the central character an old crone--the "old witch" in "Chick-tum-a-Cranie-Crow;" "Grandma Hobble-Gobble," in an acting-out game in which an old woman came begging some fire to light her pipe, but was really out to steal the children playing by the fire--and so on. "Old Raggy" is a figment of my own imagination, although the action of the game is similar to "Chick-tum-a-Cranie-Crow." "Old Raggy" is chosen and stands on her home base. All the others stand on their home base, across the playground, or a designated distance away. Both sides move towards each other, walking, "Old Raggy" pretending to be carrying a heavy load upon her back, as the others sing the song. At the lines, "Open it, open it, what can it be?" they meet and "Old Raggy" puts down her load and pretends to open it. She "shows" and tells what is in it, and she may say anything; something good to eat, something horrible, something pretty, and the children may dramatize the little play as much as they like. As she displays each "load," they react to it, then walk around her, singing the song over again, until she chooses to say, as she opens the pack, "I have MY DOGS--TO BITE YOU!" Then all run for home base, with "Old Raggy" chasing, and tagging as many as she can. The ones tagged go to "Old Raggy's" base and become "dogs" on the next round, helping her to tag at the appropriate time. The last one to be caught becomes "Old Raggy," or may be the one in the middle for the next game.

Old Raggy, Old Raggy, with your pack on your back,  
 Old Raggy, Old Raggy, put down your load.  
 Do you have berries or apples and cherries?  
 Open it, open it, what can it be?  
 (I have apples)

Old Raggy, Old Raggy, with your pack on your back,  
 Old Raggy, Old Raggy, put down your load.  
 Do you have candy bars, toy trains or little cars?  
 Open it, open it, what can it be?  
 (I have green snakes)

Old Raggy, Old Raggy, with your pack on your back,  
 Old Raggy, Old Raggy put down your load.  
 Do you have snails or cats with long tails?  
 Open it, open it, what can it be?  
 (I have dogs to bite you!)

Band 6. Lazy John. Songs of All Time,  
 Coop. Recreation Service, Delaware, Ohio

Another "acting-out" song, and I don't believe any directions will be needed for this one. Of course, like all the other game songs given here, it may also be "just sung." This is an old one, a variant of the well-known, "Soldier, Soldier, Will You Marry Me?" This one, a North Carolina version, my sisters and I learned at the John C. Campbell School in Brasstown, North Carolina, many years ago.

Band 7. Bandy-Rowe. Geordie Music  
 Publishing, Inc.

Sometimes, children don't want to do anything with a song, but just curl up and listen. Looking back, I realize that some of my happiest musical moments came when I was being rocked, or was just lying on the grass looking at the sky and feeling sleepy, with my Mother singing somewhere around the house. The little song would spread itself over me like a soft coverlet, and my mind and all of me would be at rest. Here is my song for that kind of time.

As I was going to Bandy Rowe  
 Kitty alone, Kitty alone,  
 As I was going to Bandy Rowe  
 Kitty alone-a-lye,  
 As I was going to bandy Rowe  
 Saw a crow a-flyin' low,  
 Kitty alone-a-lye  
 Rock-ama-rye-ree.

First come in was a little bee  
 Kitty alone, kitty alone,  
 First come in was a little bee  
 Kitty alone-a-lye,  
 First come in was a little bee  
 Drawing his fiddle across his nee,  
 Kitty alone-a-lye  
 Rock-a-ma-rye-ree.

Next come in was two little ants  
 Kitty alone, kitty alone,  
 Next come in was two little ants  
 Kitty alone-a-lye,  
 Next come in was two little ants  
 Fixin' around to have a dance,  
 Kitty alone-a-lye  
 Rock-ama-rye-ree.

Next come in was little Pete  
 Kitty alone, kitty alone,  
 Next come in was little Pete  
 Kitty alone-a-lye,  
 Next come in was little Pete  
 Fixin' around to go to sleep,  
 Kitty alone-a-lye  
 Rock-a-ma-rye-ree.

Next come in was little John  
 Kitty alone, kitty alone,  
 Next come in was little John  
 Kitty alone-a-lye,  
 Next come in was little John  
 One shoe off and one shoe on,  
 Kitty alone-a-lye  
 Rock-a-ma-rye-ree.

As I was going to Bandy Rowe  
Kitty alone, kitty alone,  
As I was going to Bandy Rowe  
Kitty alone-a-lye,  
As I was going to Bandy Rowe  
Saw a crow a-flyin' low,  
Kitty alone-a-lye  
Rock-a-ma-rye-ree.

Band 8. Old Bald Eagle.      Georgie Music  
Publishing, Inc.

Like, "Goin to Boston," this game has a certain way of being played, but, again, that way would be too hard for very little children. The words themselves suggest certain steps, and I find that little ones are very good at making up their own. This one we used to like to end our parties with, because we always had to get home before dark came over the hollows, for, as the song says, "Daylight is gone."

Old bald eagle, sail around,  
Daylight is gone.  
Old bald eagle, sail around,  
Daylight is gone.

Backwards and forwards across the floor,  
Daylight is gone.  
Backwards and forwards across the floor,  
Daylight is gone.

You swing here and I'll swing there,  
Daylight is gone.  
You swing here and I'll swing there.  
Daylight is gone.

Meet Miss Maggie on the floor,  
Daylight is gone.  
Meet Miss Maggie on the floor,  
Daylight is gone.

You go ride the old gray mare,  
Daylight is gone.  
You get there before I do,  
Leave my girl alone.

Big fine house in Baltimore,  
Sixteen stories high,  
Pretty little girl lives up there,  
Hope she'll never die.

Old bald eagle, sail around,  
Daylight is gone.  
Old bald eagle, sail around,  
Daylight is gone.

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