The Unquiet Grave / Searching for Lambs' / Pretty Sally / The True Lover's Farewell / The Cruel Brother / Geordie / At the Foot of Yonders Mountain / The House Carpenter
THE UNQUIET GRAVE

and

Other American Tragic Ballads

Sung by Andrew Rowan Summers

ANDREW ROWAN SUMMERS is a native Virginian, now living in New York. After studying music and voice at the University of Virginia (where he took a degree in law), he returned to his native town in the Highlands — close by to some of the best folk music and folk singing in the world — to practice law and sing. He spent a decade in searching out folk singers, folk songs, and instruments. He was especially interested in the very old singers and players, for they, he felt, would know best that which he wished to know. He took an active part in the White Top Folk Festival, which drew singers, dancers, and instrumentalists from five or six states in the Southern Appalachian region. It was at one of these festivals that Mr. Summers heard his first dulcimer, played by an old gentleman in his eighties, so feeble and weak that he could not participate in the festival. This same old fellow willed Mr. Summers his instrument when he died two years later. It is believed that Mr. Summers has perfected the nearest thing to traditional dulcimer-playing handed down from generations past.
THE UNQUIET GRAVE (Cold Blows the Wind)
[IONIAN MODE]

One of the most tragic of the ancient ballads, the words of the sixth stanza refer to the ancient belief that a betrayed maiden was pledged to him after his death and must follow him into the spirit world unless she could perform certain tasks and answer certain riddles. In this ballad the maiden is the one who lies in the grave and propounds the tasks.

Cold blows the wind to my true love,
And gently drops the rain;
I never had but one true love
And in Greenwood she lies slain.

I'll do as much for my true love
As any young man may;
I'll bit and mourn all on her grave,
For a twelve-month and a day.

When the twelve-month and one day was past
The ghost began to speak:
"Why sittest here all on my grave
And will not let me sleep?"

My breast it is as cold as clay,
My breath is earthly strong;
And if you kiss my cold clay lips
Your days they won't be long.

Go fetch me water from the desert,
And blood from out of a stone,
Go fetch me milk from a fair maiden's breast
That a young man never had known.

O down in yonder grave sweetheart,
Where we were wont to walk,
The first flower that ever I saw
Is withered to a stalk.

When shall we meet again sweetheart,
When shall we meet again?
When the oaken leaves that fall from the trees
Are green, and spring up again.

The stalk is withered and dead,
Sweetheart,
And the flower will never return,
And since I lost my own true love
What can I do but mourn?

SEARCHING FOR LAMBS
[DORIAN MODE]

This song with its very interesting modal tune and exquisite words is considered by many musiologists to be a perfect example of a folk song.

As I went out one May morning,
One May morning betime;
I met a maid, from home had stray'd
Just as the sun did shine.

What makes you rise so soon, my dear,
your journey to pursue?
your pretty little feet, they tread so sweet,
strike off the morning dew.

I'm going to feed my father's flocks,
his young and tender lambs,
that over hills and over dales
lie waiting for their dams.

O stay, o stay, you handsome maid,
and rest a moment here,
for there is none but thee alone,
that I do love so dear,

How gloriously the sun doth shine,
how pleasant is the air,
I'd rather rest on a true love's breast
than any other where.

For I am thine, and thou art mine,
no man shall uncomfit thee—
we'll join our hands in wedded bands,
and married we will be.

PRETTY SALLY
[IONIAN MODE]

This ballad is known and sung both in England and America and its main theme is stated in the old ballad "Blow Away the Dew" (see album FP 21 "Seeds of Love").

"And if you will not when you may,
you may not when you would.

The dancing on the grave, referred to in the text, is a very ancient folk custom of dancing on the grave of a deceased loved one as an expression of respect and deep grief. This same idea is clearly set forth in the second stanza of "The Unquiet Grave" (see above). The tune is older than the words and was heard at White Top Mountain, Virginia, the tune is widely known, and Thomas Moore's lovely song "Evelyn's Bower" was written to be sung to it. One variation of the tune appears in an old shape-note hymnal, with sacred words, (see "HYMNS AND CAROLS" album FP 56),

There was a rich lady, from London she came;
She called herself Sally, pretty Sally by name.
Her wealth it was more than the king he possessed;
Her beauty was more than her wealth at the best.

There was a young doctor, was living hard by,
Who on this fair damsel in love cast his eye.
He courted her nightly for a year and a day,
But still she refused him and ever said say nay.

"O Sally, dear Sally, o Sally" said he,
"O tell me the reason our love can't agree—
your cruel unkindness my ruin will prove,
unless all your hatred shall turn into love.

"No hatred I bear you, nor no other man,
but truly to fancy you I never can give over your courting, I pray you be still,
for you I'll never marry of my own free will.

'Twas soon after this, ere a year had passed by,
pretty Sally grew sick and she thought she would die.
The True Lover’s Farewell

This old song was the type which Robert Burns used as a model in many of his verses and songs. One or two of the traditional verses of this song are included in an American Burlesque song about the middle of the last century. The song is closely related to "The Turtle Dove".

O, FARE you well, I MUST be gone
AND LEAVE you FOR aWHILE.
BUT WHEREVER I go I WILL return,
THOUGH I go TEN THOUSAND MILE MY DEAR.

The Crow that is so BLACK my DEAR,
SHALL CHANGE his COlour WHITE,
AND IF EVER I PROVE FALSE TO THEE,
The day shall turn to NIGHT.

O DON'T you SEE that MIlkWhItE DOVEmeasure
A-BITInG on YONDER Tree,
LAMENTING for his OWN you LOVE
As I lament for THEE?

The RIVERS never will run Dry
Nor Rocks Melt with the Sun,
And I'll never PROVE FALSE to the girl
I love 'Til all these Things be done, MY DEAR.

The Cruel Brother

This tragic Ballad, with its haunting refrain in bug throughout the Southern Appalachian, it is easy to see the reason why it has such a hold on the people – the figure of the sister, dressed for her wedding only to be murdered by her brother, the questions and answers in the closing stanzas of the Ballad call to mind "Lord Renden".

There’s Three Fair Maids went out to Play at Ball,
1 – O the Lilly say –
There’s Three Landlords come count them all,
And the Robe Smells so sweet I know.

The First Landlord was dressed in blue
He asked his Maid to be His true.

The Second Landlord was dressed in green
He asked his Maid to be his Queen.

The Third Landlord was dressed in white
He asked his Maid to be his Wife.

IT’S you may ask my Old Father Dear
And you may ask my Mother, too.

IT’S you have asked my Old Father Dear,
And I have asked your Mother, too.

Your Sister Anne, I asked her not,
And your Brother John, – him I forgot.

Her Old Father Dear was to help her to the Yard,
Her Mother, too, was to help her to the Step.

Her Brother John was to help her up,
As he helped her up he stabbed her deep.

Go carry me out on Yon’ green Hill,
And lay me there so I may bleed.

Go haul me up on Yon’ high Hill,
And lay me there while I make my will.

IT’S what will you will to your Old Father Dear?
These Houses and lands that I have here.

IT’S what will you will to your Old Mother, too?
These bloody clothes that I do wear.

Go tell her to take them to Yonders Stream,
For my heart’s blood is in every vein.

On what will you leave to your Sister Anne?
My new Gold Ring and my Silver Fan.

And what will you leave to your Brother John?
A rope and a Gallows to hang him upon.

Geordie

Child gives many versions and extensive notes on this Ballad. It is more than possible that it recounts the incidents of an actual happening, since many early collections, though not agreeing, state that the Ballad recounts facts. Kinloch in his "Ancient Scottish Ballads" agrees that "Geordie" was George Gordon, Earl of Huntly, and that the incident related in the Ballad "originated in the factions of the family of Huntly, during the reign of queen Mary".

Go Bridle me my Milkwhite Steed,
Go Bridle me my Pony,
For I must ride to Fair London Town,
To plead for the life of Geordie.

And when she entered in the Hall,
There were lords and ladies plenty,
Down on her knees she then did fall,
To plead for the life of Geordie.

IT’S six little Babes that I have got,
The seventh lies in my body,
I’ll freely part with them everyone,
If you’ll spare me the life of Geordie.

Then Geordie looked around the Court,
And saw his Darkest Polly –
He said – My dear, you’ve come too late,
For I’m condemned already."
THE JUDGE HE LOOKED DOWN ON HIM, AND SAID "I'M SORRY FOR THEE, \nT'IS THINE OWN CONFESSION HATH HANGED THEE, MAY THE LORD HAVE MERCY ON THEE."

O GEORDIE STOLE HOP COW OR Calf, AND HE NEVER MURDERED ANY - BUT HE STOLE SIXTEEN OF THE KING'S WHITE STEEDS, AND BOLD THEM IN BONNY.

LETTY GEORDIE HANG IN GOLDEN CHAINS, (HIS CRIMES WERE NEVER MANY) - BECAUSE HE COMES OF ROYAL BLOOD, AND COURTED A VIRTUOUS LADY.

I WISH I WAS IN YONDER GROVE, WHERE TIMES I HAVE BEEN MANY - WITH MY BROAD SWORD AND MY PISTOL TOO, I'D FIGHT FOR THE LIFE OF GEORDIE.

AT THE FOOT OF YONDEL'S MOUNTAIN [IONIAN MODE]

THIS SONG IS WIDELY KNOWN AND SUNG IN VIRGINIA, THE DIRECT SIMPLICITY OF THE VERSES, WITH THEIR WARMTH AND LACK OF AFFECTATION, DEMONSTRATE THE SENSITIVITY AND POLISH TO WHICH FOLK-POETRY CAN ATTAIN.

AT THE FOOT OF YONDEL'S MOUNTAIN THERE RUNS A CLEAR STREAM, AT THE FOOT OF YONDEL'S MOUNTAIN THERE LIVES A FAIR QUEEN, SHE'S HOMELY; SHE'S PROPER, AND HER WAYS THEY ARE FEAT,

I WISH I WAS A CLARK AND COULD WRITE A FINE HAND - I'D WRITE HER A LETTER FROM THIS DISTANT LAND, I'D SEND IT BY THE WATERS, JUST FOR TO LET HER KNOW, I THINK OF PRETTY MARY WHEREVER I GO.

I WISH I WAS A LARK WITH SWIFT WINGS, AND COULD FLY - IT'S TO MY LOVE'S WINDOW THIS NIGHT I'D DRAW HIGH - I'D SIT IN THAT WINDOW ALL NIGHT LONG, AND CRY - THAT FOR LOVE OF PRETTY MARY I GLADLY WOULD DIE.

WELL MET, WELL MET TRUE LOVE, HE SAID WELL MET, WELL MET, SAID HE - I'VE JUST RETURNED FROM THE SALT, SALT SEA, AND IT'S ALL FOR THE LOVE OF THEE.

O, I COULD HAVE MARRIED THE KING'S DAUGHTER DEAR, FOR SHE WOULD HAVE MARRIED ME, BUT I REFUSED HER CROWN OF GOLD, AND IT'S ALL FOR THE LOVE OF THEE.

IF YOU COULD HAVE MARRIED THE KING'S DAUGHTER DEAR, I'M SURE YOU ARE TO BLAME - FOR I HAVE MARRIED A HOUSE CARPENTER, AND I THINK HIM A NICE YOUNG MAN.

IF YOU'LL FORBAKE YOUR HOUSE CARPENTER, AND GO ALONG WITH ME, I'LL TAKE YOU WHERE THE GRASS GROWS GREEN ON THE BANKS OF ITALIE.

IF I FORBAKE MY HOUSE CARPENTER, AND GO ALONG WITH THEE... WHAT HAVE YOU GOT TO KEEP ME UPON AND KEEP ME FROM SLAVERY?

I'VE SIX SHIPS A-SAILING THE SALT, SALT SEA, A-SAILING FOR DRY LAND, AND A HUNDRED AND TEN GOLD SAILOR MEN, SHALL BE AT THY COMMAND.

SHE TOOK HER BABE UPON HER KNEE AND KISSED IT THREE - SAYING "STAY AT HOME WITH THY FATHER DEAR, AND KEEP HIM COMPANY."

THEY HAD NOT SAILLED TWO WEEKS AT SEA, I'M SURE IT HAD NOT BEEN THREE, WHEN SHE THOUGHT OF HER DARLING BABE AT HOME AND Wept MOST BITTERLY.

O, DO YOU WEEP FOR YOUR GOLD, HE SAID, OR DO YOU WEEP FOR YOUR STORE? - OR DO YOU WEEP FOR YOUR HOUSE CARPENTER, THAT YOU'LL SEE NEVERMORE?

I DO NOT WEEP FOR MY GOLD, SHE SAID, AND I DO NOT WEEP FOR MY STORE, BUT I DO WEEP FOR MY DEAR LITTLE BABE THAT I'LL SEE NEVERMORE.

THEY HAD NOT SAILLED THREE WEEKS AT SEA I'M SURE IT HAD NOT BEEN FOUR - WHEN THAT GOOD SHIP IT SPRUNG A LEAK AND BANK TO RISE NO MORE.

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OTHER FOLKWAYS RECORDS
BY ANDREW ROWAN WILUERS:
FP 2t SEEDS OF LOVE
FP 6t EARLY AMERICAN HYMNS AND CAROLS

LITHO IN U.S.A.