

**THE CHIEF AMERICAN POETS:
SELECTED POEMS BY BRYAN,
POE, EMERSON, LONGFELLOW,
WHITTIER, HOLMES, LOWELL,
WHITMAN AND LANIER;**

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The chief American poets: selected poems by Bryan, Poe, Emerson, Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, Lowell, Whitman and Lanier; by Curtis Hidden Page

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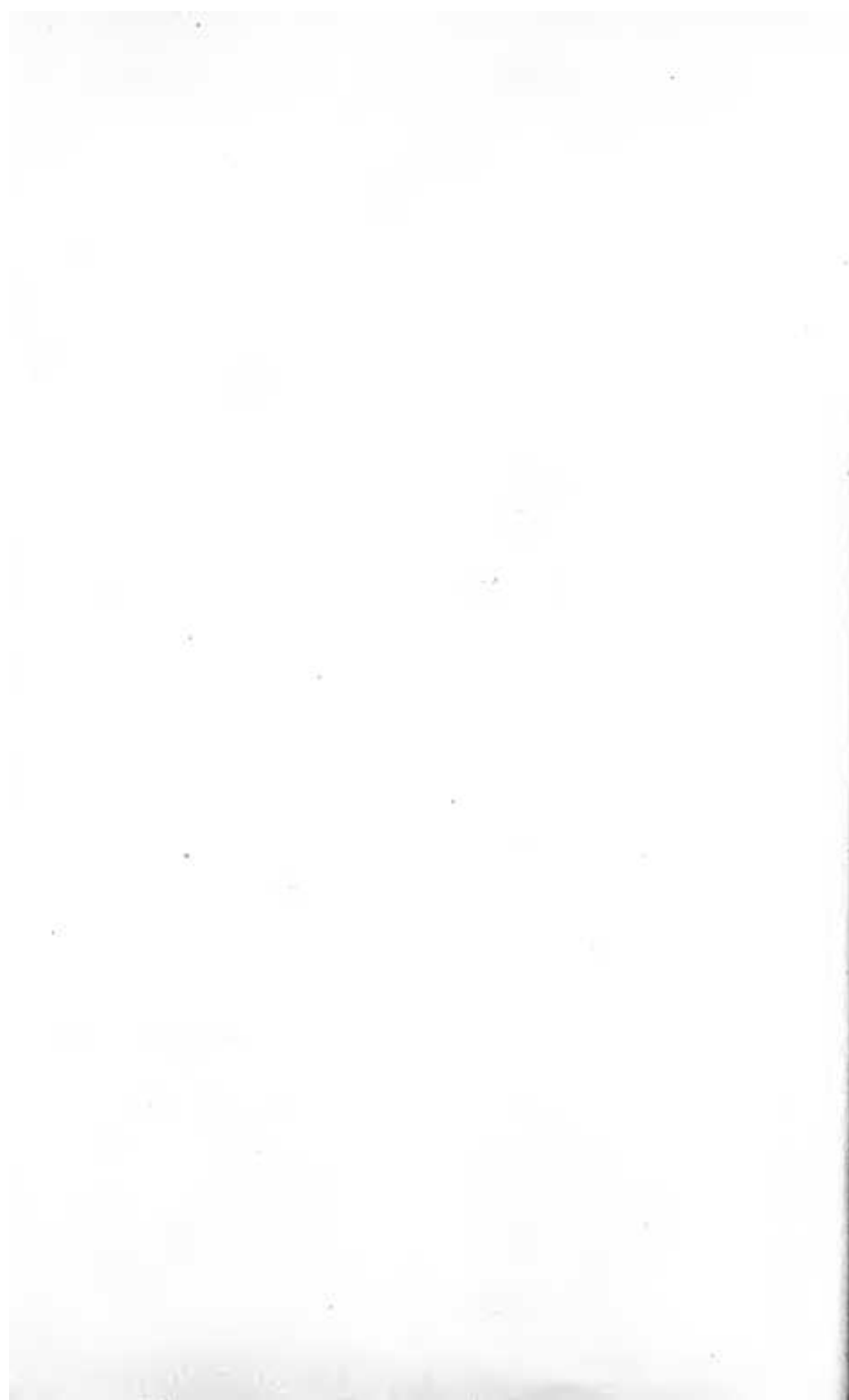
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CURTIS HIDDEN PAGE

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

More than ten years ago, at the suggestion of Professor H. M. Belden of the University of Missouri, President of the American Folk-Lore Society, Miss Louise Pound began the collection of Nebraska folk-songs as a contribution to the literature and history of Nebraska. This pamphlet is the first printed guide to the total results. It is, as the title page indicates, a syllabus only, giving, with brief comment, the first stanza, or most familiar lines, of the songs sung by the people of Nebraska, passing by word of mouth from singer to hearer and thus perpetuated. It is the initial step, it is hoped, toward the publication of a complete collection, with full text, of Nebraska folk-songs and its music,—which is the ultimate goal.

In the early settlement of Nebraska were blended two main stocks of American born ancestry. The larger came from New England, New York and Pennsylvania, via the states of the old Northwest Territory through Iowa. The lesser came from Virginia and the Carolinas through Kentucky, southern Indiana, southern Illinois and Missouri. The former, in the main, gave Nebraska her constitution, laws, political and business framework. The latter, far beyond its numbers, contributed to the oratory, literature and folk-lore of the new commonwealth. Fresh in the mind of the editor as this is written are the childhood memories of forty years ago and the wonderful phrases, folk-tales and folk-songs which came into our community with its southern strain of settlers. These southern backwoods vocabularies, stories and ballads were never ending entertainment to children of northern stock, for they revealed to us a rude literature, quaint and uncouth, transcending all the tales of our grandmothers in novel interest. Ours were, without doubt, as novel to them. Both the north and the south are contributors to this collection.

The material of this pamphlet is, as Miss Pound shows, mostly migrant from Europe, often strangely altered in its journey from the Atlantic coast to the Nebraska prairies. I cannot help thinking there are yet to be found additional songs of purely American origin: for, while the mediaeval minstrel may never have sung here in ivied castles, there dwelt in each pioneer neighborhood of the American frontier the minstrel successor, generally an odd character, half genius and half jester, who was log cabin and sod house entertainer, and made his own contributions of song and story to the stock he had inherited. Many of these, I know, have lived in Nebraska.

Besides the folk-song of Nebraska in the English tongue there is another Nebraska folk-song, more varied in its origins. Included in it are the songs of the Nebraska Indians, especially those of the Pawnee tribe; songs of the Canadian voyageurs who were the first white explorers, and folk-lore of the many European peoples who have found homes here for themselves and their children. This is a rich field for the lovers of folk-lore, and progress in its study and organization is just beginning.

The collection of this Nebraska material by Miss Pound and its publication by the Nebraska Academy of Sciences is part of a nation-wide movement, fostered by the American Folk-Lore Society, whose aim is to preserve, publish and popularize exact knowledge of that most interesting part of the folk life, which expresses itself most fully in the folk-song. In Nebraska it finds congenial company with the research work in Nebraska ethnology and history, carried on and published under the auspices of the Nebraska Academy of Sciences and Nebraska History Seminar of the State University.

One of the main purposes of the present publication is to reach every section of Nebraska with copies of this pamphlet, stimulating interest, reviving memories now dormant and bringing to light the texts of many songs familiar to the hearts but unknown to the books of Nebraska. As an incentive to this end the full text of the selections in Chapter VII, "Pioneer and Western Songs" is printed.

To each reader of this pamphlet goes this special request from the editor: Send at once to Miss Louise Pound, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, the text of any additions known to you, with exact information of the circumstances regarding their use in Nebraska, together with your own address.

For the illustrations the editor is to be held solely responsible.
ADDISON E. SHELDON

University of Nebraska,
October 1, 1915.

FOLK-SONG OF NEBRASKA AND THE CENTRAL WEST

PURPOSE OF SYLLABUS. Of interest to both the student of folk-song and the student of literature are the themes and motives of the popular song of recent times, the types of narrative, the nature of the sentiment and the humor, which make an impression strong enough to secure preservation. What is the general character of the material commending itself to the American folk-consciousness in the period just passing? Of the thousands of songs having currency, which types have the people liked well enough to remember and to hand on? The answer to questions like the foregoing should be based on widespread collection, followed by analysis and comparison of the materials secured. There are now many enthusiastic recoverers of ballads and folk-songs in the United States, especially in the Atlantic States, the South, and the Southwest¹; indeed, contemporary interest in the recovery and preservation of folk-song is now at a high level. The interest of most American collectors has centered hitherto in registering the survival of English and Scottish popular ballads in this country, or in following the fate of Old World songs which have migrated to the New. The songs and ballads of American origin, preserved alongside these aliens and persisting under the same conditions, have received less attention. For example the collection, of national scope, made through the United States Commissioner of Education, at the instance of Professor C. A. Smith, is, at least as yet, a collection of English and Scottish ballads in America and of these only.

The Nebraska collection listed and classified in the following pages is neither so exhaustive as might be wished, nor was it gathered in so systematic a way. Nevertheless a syllabus or finding list of the collection in its present state will assist, it is believed, in the identification and comparison of American

¹ See chiefly the immense collections in the Harvard library; the texts printed in *The Journal of American Folk-Lore; A Syllabus of Kentucky Folk-Song* by H. G. Shearin and J. H. Coombs (1911); the *Bulletin of the Missouri Folk-Lore Society* (1910); *Cowboy Songs* by J. A. Lomax, New York (1910); also the collections of Mr. Phillips Barry for New England, of Professor C. A. Smith in Virginia, and of Professor Reed Smith in South Carolina. The most complete bibliographical references for balladry in America are to be found in Professor H. M. Belden's article in *The Journal of American Folk-Lore*, XXIV, 1-23.

The present writer wishes to acknowledge indebtedness for some points of arrangement and presentation to the syllabus of Professor Shearin. Complete texts of several of the pieces listed in the following pages are to be found in the writer's "Traditional Ballads in Nebraska", *The Journal of American Folk-Lore*, XXVI, 351-366.

folk-pieces, and will help to determine their diffusion. The Nebraska collection, though open to the charge of partiality, deserves the charge, it is hoped, in less degree than most collections made heretofore. The Old World pieces have the greater interest because of their longer history and, usually, their higher poetical quality; and in the Nebraska collection, too, greater effort was made to secure these. But a collection of folk-song should be what its name implies. It should register what the people have cared to preserve, regardless of questions of origin, or quality, or technique.

The arrangement in the following pages is provisional; often the same piece might be classified to advantage in several groups. Where fragments only were secured sometimes these fragments were full enough for identification and sometimes not. From the stray stanzas remaining, a ballad or song might seem to belong to one group when, if the whole were at hand, it might prove to belong elsewhere. In general the chief wish in the presentation of material has been to differentiate it into classes. An effort has been made to bring pieces of the same general type together, so that the themes or motives which they exhibit and the relative popularity of these will be clear at a glance. In recovering ballads and songs, more attention was given to securing representative variety than to the accumulation of multiple texts of individual pieces.

SOURCES OF MATERIAL. "Folk-Song of Nebraska" would be misleading as a heading for the following lists, and was discarded in favor of "Folk-Song of Nebraska and the Central West". Although in every instance the pieces were recovered in Nebraska, the greater part were not learned in this state but were brought from elsewhere. The provenience of each piece has interest and but for the space demanded by the entry of details would have received systematic mention. No compositions among those included took shape in Nebraska, so far as could be determined, except "The Kinkaiders' Song" (VII, 16) and probably "The Little Old Sod Shanty" (VII, 4), both adaptations of older songs originating elsewhere. The songs in the Nebraska collection were brought to this region from Indiana, Missouri, Illinois, Wyoming, Iowa, Wisconsin, Colorado, New York, etc. For the most part they were preserved in the memory of some dweller in an outlying region, as on a ranch, or by some villager, or they are current in some isolated community. A few were derived from manuscript collections of songs (as I, 3, 12; II, 15, 16, etc.). Not many came from city dwellers, and most of the small group which did were learned in childhood on a farm or in a village.

The recording of the tunes of songs is of special value but difficult. For most of those cited here the words only have been

obtained. In many cases it was possible to determine the composer, or composers of the piece, or the year of its original appearance. So for example with "Lorena" (XIV, 11), or with some of the songs of H. C. Work or of George F. Root. It is always surprising how soon the memory is lost of the authorship of even the most widely circulated songs. No doubt canvass of the popular lyrics of the early and the later part of the nineteenth century, and wider familiarity with the works of minor poets, would add materially to the number of these identifications. But for a certain percentage of New World pieces, as of Old, it would now be wholly impossible to trace the time and place of their appearance, or the manner of their composition. This is very difficult even for pieces like "The Death of Garfield" (VI, 2) or "Jesse James" (VIII, 2); although they have arisen and found diffusion before our eyes, as it were.

TESTS OF INCLUSION. The chief requisite for inclusion as belonging to folk-song, in the following syllabus, was recovery from oral tradition. The pieces listed were learned by their singers not from the printed page but from the singing of others, and have by this time an existence not dependent upon a written original. The main essential of a folk-song is that the people sing it; that it has "lived in the folk-mouth"¹, and has persisted for a fair period of years. Entries have not been limited

¹ To the present writer it seems a mistake to make style standard-giving in a collection of folk-song. There are many who seem to hold as standard-giving the style prevailing in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; all songs of whatever time conforming to these in tone and diction are "genuine"; all others are spurious. Usually, too, the former are assumed to have some romantic-mystic "communal" origin, while the latter are termed "art" poetry. But is there such a thing as a permanent or eternal style in folk-song? Not unless reference is had to the circumstance that folk-song is addressed to the ear only; that on its appeal to the ear depends its vitality. There is a "history of taste" for folk-poetry just as for book-poetry. There are as great differences between the folk-poetry of the sixteenth and the twentieth centuries as between the book poetry of the sixteenth and the twentieth centuries.

When we contrast the older and the newer in folk-song it becomes obvious that the superiority for persistence in the popular mouth belongs with the former; nor is this to be wondered at. The older singer composed for the ear; otherwise his work was vain. The newer writes for the eye, both words and music; instead of professional musicians we now have printing. Skill in creating memorable songs is more likely to characterize composition of the first type than of the second. Much in modern song is unsingable and unrememberable; no one can expect it to make a deep impression on the popular mind. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries poets, whatever their class, were likely to be singers too. If we approach popular song from the side of musical history, it is clear enough that contributions to folk-song should be especially rich at a time when the connection between composition and delivery was very close. In the sixteenth century song was as nearly universalized as it is likely to be for a long time to come. Some musical proficiency was demanded of nearly everybody, whether belonging to the upper