

**SONGS FROM THE
HILLS OF VERMONT**

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Songs from the Hills of Vermont by Robert Hughes & Edith B. Sturgis

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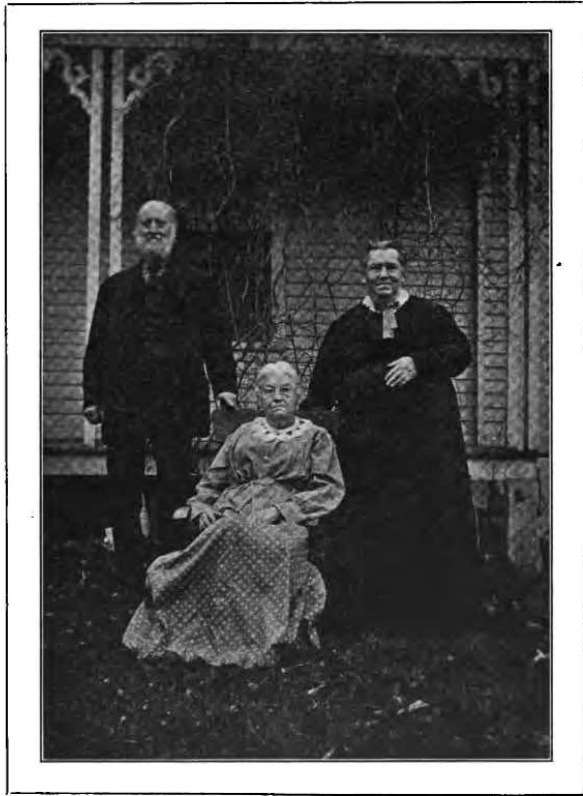
Collected
by
EDITH B. STURGIS

Music Arranged
by
ROBERT HUGHES

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SET 10

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SONGS FROM THE HILLS
OF
VERMONT

Sung by
JAMES and MARY ATWOOD
and
AUNT JENNY KNAPP



Texts Collected and Edited
by
EDITH B. STURGIS

Tunes Collected and Piano Accompaniments Arranged
With Historical Notes
by
ROBERT HUGHES



Price, \$2.00
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G. SCHIRMER, INC., NEW YORK

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Dedicated to
JAMES and MARY ATWOOD
and to
the Memory of
AUNT JENNY KNAPP

PREFACE

In a pleasant sunlit valley lying close up to the Green Hills of Vermont is a tiny village so small that its only connection with the outer world is by an old stage which rumbles in once a day from the railroad eight miles off. There are hardly more than a dozen houses in the town, one small store, and the Post Office, which is one room in a family dwelling house. A real Vermont trout brook, typically brown and clear, runs along one side of the village road, reflecting in wide, quiet spaces the blue of the sky and the big shadow of Pisgah Mountain that stands on guard as it were over the town. Pisgah is nearly four thousand feet high and forms a climax to the range of smaller mountains which surround the little valley. Bear and wildcat often roam these hills, and the gentle folk who live here the year round tell many tales of the wild animals seen and heard—tales which one can verify if one has woodcraft. This is God's country, unmolested, undisturbed by the hand of man; it lies far enough out of the beaten track to be sweet and clean and quiet. You have only to climb high up on any of the smaller hills through the natural garden of blue gentians, everlasting, and pink steeple-bush, and turn around, and there is all the world before you:—great wide stretches of sky, the blue distant mountains, a hemisphere of hills and valleys to delight the eye;—and you feel as if Heaven were very near.

There are many quaint and delightful characters in the village, as it is a community of unusual people of the good old Vermont stock. Many of them have never gone out of the state. We number them all among our friends. But the poet and his wife, James and Mary Atwood, are the two that are now uppermost in our minds, as they and their intimate friend, "Aunt Jenny" Knapp, who spent the summer with them last year, gave us all the songs in this little book.

Mary and James are farmers in their everyday life, cultivating their little farm and living off its produce. They belong in their simplicity to the rugged strength of all that hill country, the pointed fir, the brooks and the abundant wild flowers. Mary is a delightful character, full of a generous, open-hearted hospitality and affection, with a whimsical side that makes her excellent company. She has a truly delicious sense of the ridiculous and yet a real appreciation of songs and poetry (especially James's poetry). For, besides singing the old songs learnt from boyhood up, James makes verses of his own to suit every oc-

casion. Nothing is too lowly or too high for his pen. He keeps a continuous "Current Events" in verse. History is always in the making for these two dear people, whether it be the straying of a neighbor's hog into their precious garden and the resulting destruction of their potato patch, the arrival of a new visitor at one of the adjacent houses, or an unusual purchase at the village store.

There is a real home: there is a marvellous feeling of contentment with life and with each other which impresses you the moment you step across the threshold of their orderly little house. "Love alters not here, nor bends with the remover to remove." They still behold each other in the light of romance and affection, and as Mary sits by James's side and gently reminds him of a word or verse in his song over which he may be hesitating, one feels that one is far away from unhappiness and discord, that here is peace. Surely it is a privilege to be counted as their friend.

James has always sung, and is above everything else a Folk-Singer, just as his father and grandfather were before him, and one of the delightfully modest remarks with which he is apt to preface his singing is, "I'm not what you'd call a regular singer, you know, for I never learned by book nor never saw nothin' writ down. But—" and there comes over his face a gentle smile, "I've allus sung just 'cause I can't help it. My father was the same way and my grandfather too. Guess you'd call us of the old school of singing."

Years ago he must have had a fine baritone voice. Even now, while the strength and quality may be lacking, it is as true as ever and never quavers or hesitates, whether it be in the strange old minor ballads in the ancient modes or in the early American songs—may we not call them American Folk-Songs?—which have been handed down from father to son in this country. Fixing his eye on space James sings for the love of the song, for the story it tells, often stopping to laugh gently to himself, often ending with tears in his eyes. He cares not at all for the effect he makes, but he dearly loves you to love the song too, and will often enter into a dissertation on its history and probable origin. Each character in each song has for him, and for Mary, too, a personality of its own, and it is typical of him to end one of the ballads, perhaps that of "Lord Thomas and Fair Eleanor," with a soft twinkle in his eye and "I wonder now if he'd a been as happy if he'd a married Fair Eleanor from the start as he thought he

would. You know, I kinder think she wan't all she might ha' been, after all. She had a pretty sharp tongue, I'm thinkin'." It is this absorbing interest that keeps the songs always fresh and beautiful to them; they do not need moving pictures or vaudeville to amuse them, for the songs of many years back are always with them, and the people live again for them.

Mary has a deep and powerful voice, although she doesn't pretend to be a singer. Of the fifty odd songs we got from these three dear people she gave us only a few, but she sang them with gusto and fine emphasis.

I cannot end without a word about "Aunt Jenny," a dear and quaint old lady who came to live with James and Mary. She was not a "singer" like James, but her memory was unailing, and she sang after a fashion of her own, so that it was always possible to get her tunes. She, no less than the Atwoods, lived her real life in the bygone romances and stories she had learned in her youth and middle age.

It might be raining the proverbial menagerie outdoors, but once inside the little cottage, life became intensely interesting. With our chairs drawn up-around the open fire, and a preliminary

remark from Mary of "Rest your hat, Eduth; I'll go call in James from the potato patch. He wouldn't like to miss your visit. Aunt Jenny's thought up a new song for you," we were off in a cloud of dust, entering a world of fancy, fun, or love, as the case might be, much more real than the raging of the elements outside.

In most of the songs we have adhered strictly to the original script; but in a few of the oldest ballads we have thought it best to make some slight alterations to render the text suitable for present-day publication. In our generation we do not deal quite so frankly with all subjects as writers formerly did, and certainly we could not sing the original versions of some of the ballads with the unconscious simplicity of James and Mary. They accept these ballads in their entirety and feel in no way obliged to apologize for them, although James will occasionally prepare the hearer with some such remark as "There ain't nothin' bad about this song, so fur ez I can see, 'ceptin' its criminality."

E. B. S.

Groton, Massachusetts,
June, 1919.



NOTES ON THE SONGS

The following notes on the songs in this volume have been prepared in order to give the reader the most important references for tracing the histories and various versions of the songs. It is not claimed for them, however, that they cover the field exhaustively. The compiler is indebted to Professor George L. Kittredge of Harvard for his invaluable advice and assistance in gathering the material for the notes.

1. **Daily Growing** (sung by James Atwood) is a version of a ballad often recorded in Scotland and England but apparently never before recorded in this country. Johnson's "Scots Musical Museum" gives a version communicated by Burns, "Lady Mary Ann," based on "Craighton's Growing," from a MS. collection of Ancient Scottish Ballads owned by the Rev. Robert Scott, Glenbucket Parish. See Johnson's "Scots Musical Museum," ed. Stenhouse, vol. iv, pp. 349, 388*-389*; vol. ii, p. 390 (No. 377). "Craighton's Growing," like the majority of the old ballads, relates an incident which actually took place. Sir Robert Innes obtained the guardianship of the young Lord Craighton, or Craigtoun, upon the death of the latter's father in 1631, and soon afterwards married him to his oldest daughter, Elizabeth Innes. The young husband died in 1634. See Maidment's "A North Country Garland," 1824, pp. 12-14 (ed. Goldsmid, 1884, pp. 21-24); Maidment's "Scottish Ballads and Songs," 1859, pp. 232-235; Finlay's "Historical and Romantic Ballads," 1808, vol. i, pp. 179-180; Motherwell's "Minstrelsy," 1827, pp. 86-87; Charles Mackay's "Legendary and Romantic Ballads of Scotland," 1851, pp. 196-197; R. Ford's "Vagabond Songs of Scotland," vol. ii, pp. 183-184; Journal of the Folk-Song Society, vol. i, p. 214; vol. ii, pp. 44, 95, 206, 274; vol. v, pp. 190-193; Sharp's "One Hundred English Folksongs," pp. 58-59 (No. 25). This ballad has been printed in broadsides, as by H. Disley, London, and, about 1880, by H. J. Wehman, New York (No. 756).

2. **Posey Boy** (sung by Aunt Jenny Knapp) is a version of the familiar "Swapping Song" in which "The Unlucky Man" or "The Foolish Boy" exchanges one article after another for something of less value until he finally has nothing. See "Journal of American Folk-Lore," vol. xxvi, pp. 143-144; vol. xxix, p. 190; Shearin, "Syllabus," p. 35; Campbell and Sharp, "English Folksongs from the Southern Appalachians," p. 313 (No. 115); Halliwell's "Nursery Rhymes of England," 1st ed.,

pp. 6-8 (6th ed., pp. 92-93); M. H. Mason's "Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs," p. 16; Rimbault's "A Collection of Old Nursery Rhymes," p. 24.

3. **The Spinster's Lament** (sung by James Atwood) is a rearrangement of certain stanzas of the ballad "The Wooing Maid" preserved in a seventeenth-century broadside in the Roxburghe collection ("Roxburghe Ballads," ed. Chappell, vol. 3, pp. 51-56). Other versions have been printed under the titles "Old Maid's Song," "The Lovesick Maid," "Don't Let Me Die a Maid," and "Some at Eighteen." See "Journal of American Folk-Lore," vol. xxx, pp. 355-356; Baring-Gould's "A Garland of Country Song," pp. 16-17 (No. 6).

4. **The Banks of the Dee** (sung by Aunt Jenny Knapp) has apparently not been recorded in this country before. The song is printed in "The Songs of Scotland" (Alex. Gardner, pub., London, 1893) with a note stating that it was written in 1775 "on the occasion of a friend leaving Scotland to join the forces in North America." The words in the second stanza, "But now he's gone from me . . . To quell the proud rebels . . ." lend color to the statement, but the corresponding words in the present version, "But now he's gone from me . . . To quell the wild Spaniard," point to a different origin. The song has circulated widely in broadsides.

5. The oldest extant version of **The Frog in the Spring** (sung by Mary Atwood) is "The Marriage of the Frog and the Mouse," printed with music among the "Country Pastimes" in Ravenscroft's "Melismata," 1611. In 1580 a ballad entitled "A Most Strange Wedding of the Frog and the Mouse" was licensed to Edward White at Stationers Hall; and a song, "The Frog Came to the Myl Dur" (mill door) was sung in Wedderburn's "Complaint of Scotland" as early as 1549. (See Chappell's "Popular Music of the Olden Time," 1855, vol. i, p. 88.) For a group of related Scottish texts see Maidment's "Scottish Ballads and Songs," 1859, pp. 153-157; C. K. Sharpe's "A Ballad Book," No. 30; Journal of the Folk-Song Society, vol. ii, p. 225. For English traditional versions see Halliwell's Nursery Rhymes (1st ed.), No. 93, pp. 70-72; Rimbault's "Collection of Old Nursery Rhymes," pp. 26-27; Miss Mason's "Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs," pp. 8-9; Rimbault's "A Little Book of Old Songs and Ballads," p. 87; Baring-Gould's "A Book of Nursery Songs and Rhymes," No. 17, p. 27. There is an Irish version printed