

**SINGING CARR &
OTHER SONG-BALLADS
OF THE CUMBERLANDS**

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Singing Carr & other song-ballads of the Cumberlandds by William Aspenwall Bradley

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WILLIAM ASPENWALL BRADLEY

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& *Other Song-Ballads of the*
CUMBERLANDS

BY

William Aspenwall Bradley



UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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• FIRST EDITION •

TO THE
UNIV OF
CALIFORNIA

TO THE READER

THESE poems were written last summer, in the course of a second long ramble through the Kentucky Cumberlands — some in the saddle, almost, others during a prolonged stay at Hindman, my home in the mountains. Three, "Singing Carr," "The Blind Boy," and "Sourwood Mountain," were printed in the local paper, "The Little Star," from which the first found its way into a wider circulation. This little piece owes its title to Mr. Howard Brockway, the composer, who visited the mountains two years ago, with Miss Loraine Wyman, in search of those "song-ballets" with which, both on the concert platform and through their "Lonesome Tunes," they have since become so closely identified. On his return, Mr. Brockway happened to speak of "Singing Carr," and said he had heard the creek called Carr's Fork, thus "named" by the natives. I had never heard it myself, nor could I find anyone who had, when I went back there. In the meantime, however, I had written the verses, and was not sorry I had done so; for, surely, no one acquainted with that famous creek would quarrel with the appellation thus bestowed upon it. It is, indeed, "Singing Carr," though perhaps not all the "citizens" are as averse to profane balladry as I have intimated! Even the members of the Old Carr Church are a vigorous, vital lot, both men and women, and do not enjoy life the less because of their peculiar religious principles. I am not likely to forget a night I once spent among them. It was noon when we left Hindman, a bright October day, the bottoms tawny with blown broom-sedge, the hills dyed purple and pale primrose with "Farewell Summer," and the water in the creeks reflecting the deep azure of the sky, as they parted swiftly past rocks of gleaming golden ochre; but it was nearly dark when,

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crossing Irishman Mountain, the gateway of its burying-ground quaintly inscribed with the words, "God Rest Those Sleeps Here," we descended on the waters of Carr, and reached our destination. This was a big cabin set somewhat back from the main creek, on a "branch," where all the family, warned of our coming, had assembled to receive us. There must have been nearly thirty—men, women, and children—that night about the sputtering coal fire. In the centre of the circle sat the old grandmother, an impressive figure in her black dress and with her crimson scarf drawn close about her white hair and her bold, handsome face, a network of fine wrinkles. When the inevitable flat bottle was produced, it was handed first to her. "Well, I hain't no hypocrite, an' I don't mind owning I do like my little dram," she said, as she tilted it to her lips. Then it passed round the entire circle, coming last to a young mother who poured out a spoonful of the corn liquor and gave the soothing dose to her fretful infant. It was then that the telephone bell rang and I first learned of this singular substitute for the phonograph—"canned music in the mountains." The other poems are compounded about equally of legendary lore and of matter that came under my immediate observation—with one or two of a more imaginative turn. It is my hope that the little group, as a whole, may give an even more intimate impression of the mountain life and character than friendly readers professed to find in the longer narrative poems of my first collection, "Old Christmas."

W. A. B.

New Haven, Connecticut
November, 1917

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Singing Carr