

# Folk-Songs of the South

COLLECTED UNDER THE  
AUSPICES OF THE WEST VIRGINIA  
FOLK-LORE SOCIETY

AND EDITED BY

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## A TOLLIVER-MARTIN FEUD SONG

CONTRIBUTED by Mr. C. H. Ellis, Williamson, Mingo County, 1918. His mother was a Hatfield, and died when he was three months old. Joseph Hatfield, son of Ali Hatfield, took charge of him and brought him up in the east end of Mingo County. About two years after his mother died, his father moved back to Morehead, Rowan County, Kentucky, where he was still living at the time these data were given. The place is in the midst of the Tolliver-Martin feud country. He furnished the facts concerning the affair after Martin had been sent to jail, as follows:

A man named Bowling was one of the men who went after Martin, whose wife happened to be visiting him at the time. They brought them back together, but removed her before the killing occurred. Bowling just stepped up to Martin and shot him several times.

Martin lived a mile east of Morehead, where, some years later, a big lumber company located. Martin had two sons, lads at the time of his murder, and one of them went West. Bowling left the country, too, but after a number of years he came back. He got a job with the lumber company as an inspector of timber, and one day, while he and some others were looking at Martin's grave, which they could see from the camp, Bowling said to them, "I shot that . . . and I wish he were alive so that I could shoot him again."

Martin's younger son overheard the remark, went home, and tried to get his father's pistol, but his mother would not let him have it. Then he sent a telegram to his brother out West, who came home, waited in the wood, shot Bowling, and then went back. The body was rotten before it was found. No one ever knew who shot Bowling, but really everybody knew.

This song is cited by Shearin and Combs, p. 18, as "The Rowan County Tragedy." A note by W. A. Bradley ascribes it ("The Rowan County Trouble") to "the blind Day Brothers" (*Berea Quarterly*, October, 1915, XVIII, No. 4, p. 10). The next piece in the present collection (No. 40) is, in fact, a rewording of this song to fit a similar occurrence.

- 1 Come all you fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters too,  
And I'll relate to you a history of the Rowan County crew.  
It was in the month of August, all on election day,  
John Martin he was wounded; they say by John Day.
- 2 But he did not believe it; he did not think it so;  
He thought it was Floyd Tolliver who struck the fatal blow.  
Martin did recover; some months had come and passed,  
When in the town of Morehead these two men did meet at last.
- 3 Tolliver, with a friend or two, about the streets did walk;  
He seemed to be uneasy, with no one wished to talk.  
He stepped into Judge Carety's grocery<sup>1</sup> and stepped up to the bar,  
But little did he think he had met the fatal hour.

<sup>1</sup> For *bar-room*.



- 4 . . . Martin stepped in at the door,  
 And a few words passed between them concerning the [trouble]  
 before.  
 The people were excited, began to rush out of the room,  
 When a shot from Martin's pistol laid Tolliver in the tomb.
- 5 Martin was arrested, and taken to Winchester jail  
 . . . . .  
 They killed the deputy sheriff, Baumgardner was his name  
 . . . . .
- 6 . . . his life may never be forgot,  
 His body was pierced and torn by thirty-three buck shot.  
 They shot and wounded young Ad Sizemore, his life was luckily  
 saved;  
 He seems to shun all groghops, since he stood so near the grave.
- 7 Some parties forged an order, their names I do not know,  
 . . . and for Martin they did go.  
 "It is a plan to kill me," to the jailer Martin said.  
 (The jailer gave him up.) . . .
- 8 When the train arrives at Farmer's, . . .  
 A mob approached the engineer, and bade him not to move.  
 Martin was in the smoking car, accompanied by his wife;  
 They did not want her present, when they took her husband's  
 life.
- 9 . . . . .  
 She cried, "O Lord, they've killed him, I heard the pistol fire."  
 In the bottom of the whiskey glass the lurking devil dwells,  
 It burns the breast of those who drink it and sends their souls to  
 hell.