OLD CHRISTMAS AND OTHER KENTUCKY TALES IN VERSE AND SINGING CARR AND OTHER SONG BALLADS OF THE KENTUCKY CUMBERLANDS: WILLIAM ASPENWALL BRADLEY'S VERSIFIED VIEWS OF TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY APPALACHIA

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In the summer of 1913, William Aspenwall Bradley, a New York author, editor, and literary agent, traveled to the Cumberland Mountains of southeastern Kentucky to write a series of articles about mountain life for Harper's Magazine. In 1916 he returned to spend a second summer in the mountains and to write two additional articles. In 1917 a collection of poems based on the first visit was published as Old Christmas and Other Kentucky Tales in Verse. In 1918, poems written during Bradley's second sojourn in the mountains were published in Singing Carr and Other Song Ballads of the Kentucky Cumberlands. The poems have been largely forgotten even by anthologists and historians of Kentucky literature. It is primarily for his work in France, where he remained after his service there in World War I until his death in 1939, that Bradley is most likely to be remembered. He was made a Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor for his leadership in the publication of French writers in America and American writers in France and for his highly regarded translations of French literature. His best-known American work, a biography of William Cullen Bryant, had seven publishings between 1914 and 1975.
At the time of their publication, however, both *Old Christmas* and *Singing Carr* were well-accepted by the reading public and reviewers for major newspapers. Bradley was praised for his mastery of the art of storytelling and for his vivid portrayal of the mountain spirit and culture. Bradley attributed his ability to capture details of mountain life to a bout with typhoid that extended his summer visit into December and gave him the opportunity to share the day-to-day life of the residents of Hindman during his convalescence.

The narrative verses of *Old Christmas* are based on Bradley's excursions throughout southeastern Kentucky and his recuperation in Hindman during his first visit. The song-ballads of *Singing Carr* sprang from a return visit to Hindman in 1916. Both volumes reveal Bradley's extensive knowledge and appreciation of British literature from medieval times through the Victorian Age. Especially evident is his penchant for ballads, folksongs, and folktales, in both the original and mountain versions. Folk music and folktales are the dominant influence on the form and content of the poems. But romantic and Victorian subjects and poetic devices are also apparent. Realistic descriptions of harsh conditions and environment occur, but usually within a romantic context. Bradley, who wrote and translated numerous books and articles on music and the visual arts, reveals his artistic eye in the vivid, detailed descriptions of landscapes.

The poems were written in an age when poetry was overshadowed by the novel and literature was undergoing a metamorphosis from closed form and
traditional topics to free verse and avant-garde themes. His verse was somewhat
anachronistic even before its publication. Although nearly forgotten today,
the verses still offer insight into a popular view of Appalachia at the turn of the
century and an escape into Bradley's literary Brigadoon.

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... a grim wall stands,
'Twixt east and west, the Cumberlands,
Built up of ridges, fold on fold,
And ... their steep escarpments hold
Deep winding valleys lost between
Sheer sombre hillsides clad with green
Oak forests, or with waving corn.
... in those valleys, men were born,
Lived, loved, and died, and never saw
The world beyond. . . .

— "The New Life"
Introduction

In June of 1913, Harper's magazine commissioned William Aspenwall Bradley, a New York author, editor, and literary agent, to write a series of articles about life in the Cumberland Mountains at that time. Bradley had already established his literary reputation as author of the definitive biography of William Cullen Bryant and as editor of The Prayers of Doctor Samuel Johnson, The Correspondence of Philip Sidney and Hubert Lanquet, and Everett Edward Hale's The Man Without a Country. His essays and poetry had been published in magazines such as Bookmark, Independent, Century, Hampton, Nation, and Scribner's, and he had served as editor of McClure's (Who's Who). Harper's was able to lure Bradley from his lucrative position in the east coast literary establishment because of several forces: dissatisfaction in his marriage, a long-standing desire to visit a region that had fascinated him since boyhood, and the opportunity to write about a region that had piqued the curiosity of a nation.

As railroads had made the region more accessible, travelers made the fashionable trek to the region and returned with stories of primitive life and pristine landscapes. Industrialists went there to claim mineral and timber resources; educators, social workers, and church workers went to teach, cure, and minister to the people. Writers, artists, and folklorists went to describe the culture for their contemporaries and to record it for future generations (Ward 72-76).
Bradley was among those who went to report on and record the culture. Like many of his contemporaries, Bradley believed that the change that had begun when residents returned to the area after fighting in the Civil War would increase rapidly as railroads ended geographical isolation and industrialism and education penetrated the region’s social isolation. Bradley’s expressed desire was to contribute to the preservation of mountain folk culture before it was further corrupted by progress.

In April 1913, as Bradley prepared for his trip to the mountains, he wrote to President William Frost of Berea College regarding his plans to visit and to write about the region. After corresponding with Frost for several months, Bradley arrived in Berea in early June, accompanied by artist Jack Duncan who was to sketch scenes along the route. After a few days at Berea, the two embarked on their journey, beginning at London and following an old mail route to Harlan. From there they went to Hyden, Hazard, and Jackson, then retraced their route southward to the Kentucky-Virginia border near Whitesburg and made a brief foray into Virginia. They traveled mostly on foot, occasionally by horse or mule when the animals were available, and briefly on the new railroad. They often stopped at mountain cabins to eat, to stay the night, or to visit people suggested by Dr. Frost ("Hobnobbing" 91-96).

Their planned return to Berea included a northwestern excursion into Knott County. By the time of his arrival there Bradley had contacted typhoid, locally known as "mountain fever," and was taken to the Hindman Settlement School to
recuperate (Watts Mar. 1986). He remained there until the return of students in the
fall left no room for visitors; he then moved to the hotel in Hindman where he
resided until shortly before Christmas when a fire destroyed the hotel and much of
the town. Having lost most of his possessions in the fire, Bradley was forced to
return to his home in Connecticut (Old Christmas vii; Watts Mar. 1986). From
there, Bradley wrote to Dr. Frost that by the time of the fire his convalescence had
become largely a "technical" one which might have extended indefinitely if the fire
had not intervened. In the letter, Bradley credits the illness with imposing upon
his visit the length and conditions that allowed him to know and admire the life
and character of the mountain people in a way that would otherwise have been
impossible (Jan. 29, 1914).

Bradley's first reactions to his mountain foray appeared in three 1915 issues
of Harper's magazine: "Hobnobbing with Hillbillies," "In Shakespeare's America,"
and "Song Ballets and Devil's Ditties." "Song Ballets and Devil's Ditties," printed
in the May issue, describes old English and Scottish ballads heard in the mountains
and tells of the mountaineers' adaptation of those songs using local incidents and
their own idiom. "In Shakespeare's America," published in August, explains
archaic and unusual pronunciations, usages, and expressions encountered in the
Cumberlands and believed to have been handed down for generations from
ancestors from northern England and the Scottish borderlands (Fischer 621).
"Hobnobbing with Hillbillies," which appeared in December 1915, traces Bradley's
route through the mountains, describing the towns, creeks, landscapes, and people
encountered along the way, and pointing out similarities to Defoe's London and Robin Hood's forests.

Although the verses of *Old Christmas and Other Kentucky Tales in Verse* were based on the experiences of the 1913 trip, the volume of poetry was not completed until after Bradley's second visit in 1916. Its 1917 publication date preceded the early 1918 publication of *Singing Carr and Other Kentucky Tales in Verse* by only a few months. Two additional magazine articles, "Women on Troublesome" and "The Folk Culture of the Kentucky Cumberlands," were also published in 1918. "Women on Troublesome" tells the story of the "furrin" women from the Bluegrass country who established the Hindman Settlement School. "The Folk Culture of the Kentucky Cumberlands" brings together the author's recollections of ethnic heritage, legendary lore, language, and music of the mountain culture. Those articles completed Bradley's literary and journalistic accounts of his Kentucky travels.
Structure, Diction, and Poetic Devices

Rhyme, Rhythm, Meter, and Other Structural Devices

Bradley's preference for the art, music, and literature of earlier ages made him especially eager to capture the aspects of mountain culture rooted in seventeenth and eighteenth century Britain. *Old Christmas and Other Kentucky Tales in Verse* and *Singing Carr and Other Song Ballads of the Kentucky Cumberlands* are filled with remnants of that early culture that had survived in the folklore of the Cumberlands.

Early English folklorist W. J. Thoms, who originated the term folklore, described the object of his study as "remnants of earlier cultures surviving in the traditions of the peasant class" (qtd. in Brunvand 2). American folklorist Archer Taylor later described folklore as the customs, beliefs, values, and material remnants transmitted from one generation to the next by "word of mouth, custom, and practice" (Brunvand 1). Jan Harold Brunvand describes it as "those materials in culture that circulate among members of any group in different versions, whether in oral form or by means of customary example, as well as in the processes of traditional performance and communication." (7). All three definitions typically recognize three modes of folklore: oral, customary, and material. Oral folklore consists of folk speech, proverbs, riddles, rhymes, narratives, ballads, and songs (Brunvand 4). Customary folklore includes folk beliefs, superstitions, customs and festivals, dances and dramas, games, and gestures (Brunvand 5).
Material folklore encompasses architecture, crafts, arts, costumes, and food (Brunvand 5). Bradley draws heavily from all three modes. However, oral folklore — ballads, folksongs, folktales, rhymes, and speech — are the dominant influence in his two volumes of Kentucky poetry.

Bradley went to the Cumberlands with impressive knowledge of ballads and folksongs and of their collectors and historians. Prose accounts of his visits contain numerous references to Francis James Child and H. G. Shearin, whom Josiah Combs credits with "blaz[ing] the trail of ballad collection" (52). They also make frequent mention of Englishman Cecil Sharp and Kentuckians Katherine Jackson French, Howard Brockway, and Lorraine Wyman, who were collecting ballads in the Cumberlands at the time of Bradley's visits (Brunvand 157). In "Song Ballets and Devil's Ditties," the author recounts his efforts to make contact with Mrs. French and his elation at being able to examine her manuscripts while visiting Dr. Frost at Berea College. He was especially thrilled to find sixty specimens, excluding variants, thirty of which he says had been positively identified as old ballads in Child's British Museum manuscript (905-06).

The influence of ballads and folksongs is first apparent in Bradley's choice of titles: *Old Christmas and Other Kentucky Tales in Verse* and *Singing Carr and Other Song Ballads of the Kentucky Cumberlands*. As the titles promise, the style and form of the verses in both collections resemble that of ballads and folksongs. The "tales in verse," like traditional ballads, are told by narrators who often begin in the middle of the story and speak in dialect. The song ballads of *Singing Carr,*
like folksongs, are more lyrical than narrative and often suggest, rather than tell, the details of their stories. According to folklorist Cecil Sharp, a defining characteristic of folksongs and ballads is their creation by "common folk" or "unlettered people without formal education" (4). Bradley's style and diction create the illusion that his tales and song ballads also sprang from such sources.

The use of a narrator is one of Bradley's most obvious borrowings from the traditional ballad. The speech of most of Bradley's narrators reveals them to be natives of the Cumberlands. Most address a listener who seems unfamiliar with the region. The uninformed listener's presence is implied by the narrator's repetition of or response to the stranger's questions or comments. Occasionally, the narrator, in a variation from traditional ballad form, interrupts his tale with asides or personal opinions that give the listener insight into the history of the tale or reactions of the residents. In the implied presence of the listener and the asides, Bradley integrates characteristics of the Romantic and the Victorian monologue into his verses. The technique is illustrated in the following poems: "Old Christmas," "Saul of the Mountains," "Lake Erie's Demon Lover," "A Mountain Faustus," "Little Leatherwood," "Gambols on Gayly," and "Prince o' Peace."

"Lake Erie's Demon Lover" offers a typical example.¹ The monologue begins with the narrator's repetition of a stranger's question: "Who was that feller we saw pass / A-traveling on a little ass?" It continues with the narrator's answer: "Why that

¹Poems of Old Christmas and Singing Carr are reprinted in Appendix 2.
was old Doc Jimpson Stote." In the middle of the tale, the narrator interrupts the story with a commentary on the community's view of nurses: "Nurses has the name / O' leading lives o' sin and shame / 'Mong us folks here." Then, before resuming his tale, he shares his personal opinion of Doc Stote's character: "If I wanted to keep my life, / I wouldn't let doc use no knife on me..."

In some of the tales, Bradley varies the identity of narrator and listener. In "The Mountain Angel," a stranger to the region speaks. His tale is a farewell speech to another outsider, a nurse, who will remain to continue her "noble deeds" and "helpful ways" among the mountain people. "The Boy Speaks," "Invitations," "Lullaby," and "The New Life" are all spoken by one mountain native to another — a boy directing his new lover M'liiss to fix some "vittles" before they bury the wife he has just slain; a farmer inviting his neighbors to "take a night" of "frolic an' fun" to celebrate the harvest; a mother futilely attempting to comfort the starving infant at her breast; and the head of a mountain family describing the "quare-turned" feller who came to his cabin in search of songs. "The Child and the Rattler" is told in the words of a trusting child to her devious playmate, a poisonous snake. "The Sanger's Call" is the reminiscence of an aged mountain woman directed to unidentified visitors at the cabin she has occupied during the fifty years since her groom was slain on his way to get their "marriage papers."

Lady," and "The Doubles" describe persons and incidents observed by a third-person narrator, perhaps Bradley himself, since he states in the Preface to *Old Christmas* that his verses describe places he visited and people he met during his travels (*Old Christmas* xii).

In a few poems Bradley adds other voices to that of the traditional narrator to create a dialogue. In "Morgan's Men," for example, a bystander asks a passing party on horseback, "Who may ye be?" The riders reply that they are "men who fought with Morgan's band, come up from Tennessee." The conversation continues, with each change of speaker indicated by the beginning of a new stanza. A second example occurs in "The Fiddler," which includes two separate dialogues, one between the Hale family of Harlan and the fiddler who passes their home on his way to play for a Christmas festivity at Breaks o' Ball and another between the fiddler and the Hales' enemy, the Dean family. The words of a third-person narrator are interspersed throughout the two dialogues. In "At Parting" Bradley begins with the words "She said," creating expectation of a dialogue. However, after that two-word introduction by the first speaker, the poem becomes a monologue consisting of the woman's loving farewell to a departing visitor whose child she now carries.

Repetition of word, line, and stanza is another technique employed by Bradley to create verses resembling traditional ballads or folksongs. Words, lines, and stanzas are sometimes repeated only partially and at other times in slightly altered form (Brunvand 180). For example, several lines from "the only song
[Little Leatherwood] knew are quoted midway through the poem and once more near the poem’s end. "Morgan's Men" opens with a verbal exchange between a group of men on horseback and a bystander. The bystander inquires, "Why do you go / Each one o' nine with a new ploy-line hung at his saddle bow?" and the riders reply, "To hunt her out and hang her high, who Morgan did betray." A variation of the riders' reply occurs in the final two stanzas of the poem: "So that is the reason why we ride, and why you see us go / Each one o' nine, with a new ploy-line hung at his saddle bow." In the final stanza of "The Fiddler," events described in earlier stanzas are repeated at the close of the poem in italics, a device used by Bradley to indicate songs and other "inserts" in his poems. In this case, the words suggest a song written later about the incident.

Often, Bradley begins a new line by repeating words or phrases that ended the previous line. For example, the first stanza of "Will Warner" ends with the words "Will Warner staggered and clutched the air," and the following stanza begins "clutched the air, and the world went black." In "Morgan's Men," a stanza beginning with "He lay a crumpled, lifeless thing ..." follows a stanza ending "[Morgan] lay a lifeless thing ..." Other repetitions give a refrain-like ending to stanzas. The first stanza of "Singing Carr" ends with the words "by singing on the line." Succeeding stanzas end with slightly altered repetitions: "a-singing on the line," and "upon the people's line." The sanger's call, "Hee-pee-oo-o! Hee-pee-oo-oo / Hee-pee! Yee-ou!" gives a refrain-like ending to each stanza of the poem "The Sanger's Call."
Repetition in the form of alliteration and assonance also contributes to the "song-ballad" sound. Alliteration such as "a dog of a Darrell" in "Will Warner," "git a gallon" in "Saul and the Mountains," "fierce feud fights" in "The New Life," and "silently and solemnly" in "Men of Harlan" are typical of the many that lend lyricism to Bradley's verses. Assonance such as "there in the dog run, gun in hand" from "The Boy Speaks" and "solitude a solace brought" from "The New Life," are almost as common. Often, entire words are repeated as "a death for a death" in "Will Warner" and the shout of "fiddler, fiddler" in "The Fiddler."

Bradley also employs the rhythm, meter, and rhyme schemes common to ballads and folksongs. Approximately half of the seventeen narratives of Old Christmas are composed of two-hundred to three-hundred lines of rhymed couplets in continuous form. Verses of one-hundred lines or less, written in three-, six-, or nine-line stanzas constitute the remainder of that volume and most of Singing Carr. Most three-line stanzas are rhymed tercets. Six- and nine-line stanzas usually rhyme in couplets, with nine-line stanzas including one tercet placed in varying positions among the couplets. Tetrameter is the dominant line length; iambic and anapests are the most common rhythms. The seven-foot iambic lines of "Men of Harlan" read like the four-foot and three-foot lines that often alternate in the traditional ballad: "Those silent men, in sombre black all clad from foot to head, / Thought they have left their lonely hills and the narrow creek's rough bed."

Unusual stanza patterns are employed in "The Child and the Rattler" and "The Fiddler." In "The Fiddler," where a new stanza signals a new speaker, stanza
length varies with the length of each person's utterance. The short narrative "The Child and the Rattler" is divided by italicized, bracketed lines that appear to be stage directions. The first one follows line six: 

"[The child hits the snake with its spoon, the snake coils, strikes the child, and glides away]." The second "direction," "[Drowsily]," immediately precedes the final two lines of the narrative.

Variation of line length and rhythm in question and answer sequences that open many poems suggests a conversational cadence. Enjambments also enhance the conversational rhythm, as in "The Strange Woman:"

What spell was on me when I wed
That brutal boy who seeks my bed
Only when drunk. His kiss — his sight
I loathe. I shall kill him tonight...

Caesuras, too, vary rhythm and create conversational cadence. "The Sanger's Call" illustrates the technique: "I'm tired. My old hands tremble so / They scarcely now can hold the hoe." "The Ballad Collector" provides another example: "Say, fellers, did you see the man passed by here down the creek? / I met wi' him a-hoeing corn, last Wednesday was a week." In poems with seven-foot lines, caesuras usually follow the fourth accented syllable, as in "Men of Harlan": "But the mountain men of Harlan, you may tell them all the while, / when they pass through our village, for they ride in single file" (Singing Carr).

Bradley most often chooses expressions from folksongs and ballads that had retained what Josiah Combs identified as "the racy, rustic idiom of Shakespeare
and Chaucer" (36). At times he adopts language and form from corrupted mountain versions of those songs. Fischer points out that some of the corruptions that found their way into songs from Scotch, Irish, and British heritage came from French, Spanish, German, and other immigrants and from native Americans. One of the first corruptions Bradley heard was a version of "Barbara Allen's Cruelty," a ballad mentioned in the writing of Samuel Pepys and Oliver Goldsmith and still sung in 1913 by women doing laundry in the hills of Kentucky ("Song Ballets" 906-07).

In "Lake Erie's Demon Lover," Bradley combines the title of one ballad, "The Demon Lover," and from the story line of another, "The Two Daughters" (McNeil 47, 168). In "Sourwood Mountain," he borrows form, title, and content from a folksong that he sang as he crossed Pine Mountain into Letcher County ("Hobnobbing" 92). In odd-numbered lines of the poem he tells the story of a local incident in which a Bell County women refused to allow anyone to approach the bodies of her slain husband and daughter and drove approaching hogs away with a stick. Alternate lines repeat the refrain "Hey do diddle-dum day" of the original song.

CHICKEN crowing on Sourwood Mountain

Hey ho diddle-dum day.

Get my gun and I'll go hunting.

Hey ho diddle-dum day.
Using a similar strategy, Bradley borrows title, rhyme scheme, rhythm, — and one entire line — of an old children's rhyme to tell the tale of a mountain father's "penetentiarying." The poem begins:

Sing a song of sixpence,

Pappy's in the pen.

Mammy's riding up the creek

To get him out again.

Bradley called the custom of altering old English folksongs, rhymes, and ballads to relate local events in mountain idiom "folk etymologizing" ("Song Ballets" 911).

In "Will Warner" Bradley acknowledges the British broadside ballad by subtitling the poem "Ballad for a Cumberland Broadside." Broadside ballads, which received their name from "the crudely printed single sheets containing the lyrics for a new song and the name of a familiar tune to which it might be sung" were sold on the streets of England from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century (Brunvand 156). According to Brunvand, broadside ballads were more sensational, more subjective, more varied in stanza form and less poetic than traditional, orally transmitted ballads (186). Characters of the broadsides are more stereotyped and diction more pronounced (Brunvand 186). Inexplicably, "Will Warner" reads more like a traditional ballad than like a broadside. However, several other poems in Bradley's collection do demonstrate characteristics of the broadside. Humorous endings similar to those of many broadside ballads, conclude "Saul of the Mountains" and "A Mountain Faustus." One such ending concludes "Saul of the
Mountains" when Saul, after being jilted by Sue Dalin, "marries a widow, / who turn[s] out to be a shrew . . . " Another is found in "A Mountain Faustus" when the title character cheats his "old friend" the devil and gets "to heaven by a sneak!"

Bradley encountered his first Cumberland broadside when, upon his arrival at Berea, he heard "The J.B. Marcum Assassination" sung in the town square and found it being circulated "in print form like a seventeenth century broadside" ("Song Ballets" 8). President Frost considered the "boys who follow writing [such] ballads [as] the real journalists and historians of mountain culture" ("Song Ballets" 9). Bradley reports hearing many tales that had passed into broadside ballads during his journey.

The adaptation of stylistic devices, rhythm, meter, and form of the ballads, folksongs, and folktales brought from the highlands and borderlands of Scotland and England to the mountains of southeastern Kentucky was a significant strategy in Bradley's effort to communicate the mountain culture to his contemporaries and to preserve it for future readers. Whether the songs had survived in uncorrupted form or had been adapted to idioms and incidents of the mountains, Bradley valued them as the source of the mountaineers' imaginative nature, expressive speech, and romantic appeal and as links with the British cultural heritage of the Cumberlands. He also valued the insight they gave into the spirit of the region and of a people much in vogue with his fellow turn-of-the-century Americans.
Diction

Just as William Bradley looked to the songs and ballads of the Cumberland folk culture for structure and cadence of his poems, so did he turn to the expressions and dialect of the culture for the language of his poems. In the Preface to Old Christmas Bradley explains that mountain speech is not, as often supposed, "a mere uncouth dialect," but a language in which was preserved the "fluidity and flux" of the seventeenth century idioms of the Bible, of Shakespeare, and of ancient Scottish and English ballads and folksongs. He admires the "pristine poetic quality" that gives mountain speech its potential for variation and invention ("In Shakespeare's America" 437). In an attempt to capture the essence of the language for his readers, Bradley adopts the grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and unusual usages of native mountain speakers. He also uses phonetic spelling to suggest pronunciations, a controversial technique which Kentucky scholars such as Jim Wayne Miller have recommended be kept to a minimum to avoid "ugly distortions" (Miller 16). Miller acknowledges, however, that colorful language interests writers, editors, and readers. Since Bradley came to Kentucky as a magazine writer, his desire to appeal to Harper's editors and his readers through colorful language is understandable. And while the author does employ phonetic spelling to reproduce that language, he uses it selectively, reserving it in most cases for native mountain speakers. Pronunciations are suggested by spellings such as sartin (certain), feller (fellow), wrastle (wrestle), furrin' (foreign, with the Elizabethan meaning of "anyone from another region"), pore (poor), dreen (drain),
follered (followed), and widder (widow). The phonetically suggested pronunciations closely resemble pronunciations described by scholars such as David Fischer (652), and their use is in keeping with Bradley's stated intention not "to render with any literalness the mere dialect of the mountain people . . . but simply to suggest it, and to keep the idiom" (Old Christmas ix).

Cratis Williams claims that some of those usages are archaic rather than incorrect. As examples he cites past tenses such as help for helped; omitted r's such as in cuss for curse; pronunciation of oi as i as in jine for join; pronunciation of short e as a short a as in service for service; and the omission of the final g in ing. All of those pronunciations are used by Bradley except omission of the g in ing. His choice not to reproduce that characteristic of mountain speech is puzzling since, as Williams notes, the omission of the final g is responsible for much of the liquid flow of the language (Williams 1-22). Since it is also the pronunciation most copied in attempts to replicate dialect, Bradley might have feared that its use would seem a cliché. Other peculiarities of mountain speech are suggested by omission of the initial a sound from words such as 'lowed (allowed), 'bout (about), and 'tended (attended). An a is added to the beginning of words such as a-singing, a-standing, and a-riding to imitate local pronunciations. The final consonant is dropped from still other words: ol' (old) and o' (of).

Miller, in urging that writers rely less on phonetic spellings, encourages more dependence on the vivid expressions and exactness of folk speech to convey its color and precision (Miller 17). "For the sake of color and appropriateness,"
Bradley chose to use "local words, or . . . common words in their local uses . . ." (Old Christmas ix), and to employ the "fanciful and figurative" words and expressions of which Miller speaks in several ways. He uses the compound words common to the mountain dialect. His narrators speak of Bible-books, gravehouses, jailhouses, pallet-beds, cabin-rooms, sun-balls, feud-fights, preacher-men, rifle-guns and ballet-songs. They also utter words with meanings common in fifteenth and sixteenth century Britain, but nearly forgotten in turn-of-the-century America:

- flowerpot to mean a bouquet, a body to mean a person, mought to mean might, clean to mean clear (as in "shot clean through"), nigh to mean nearly, took on to mean acted upset, took a spell to mean fainted, poppet to mean infant, papers to mean any official documents, palings to mean porch railings, box to mean telephone, pretties to mean handcrafted items, squander to mean defeat (as in war), kindly to mean slightly, least 'uns to mean youngest children, they to mean there, and cunnana as a sheep call. Bradley also replicates the mountaineer's use of words as other-than-usual parts of speech. For example, suspicion, usually a noun, is used as a verb, as in "I suspicion that he is guilty." He also adopts descriptive expressions: skirts are "kelted to the knee" and people eat "a meal of vittles." In Albion's Seed, Fisher traces such usages to the seventeenth-and-eighteenth century borderlands of England and Scotland (652-55). He also attributes the frequent double negatives of the dialect to early Scotland and England (653). While emphasizing the significance of British influence, Fisher, Williams, Ellen Semple Churchill, and others who have studied the history and culture of the region, are
careful to point out that the influence of Native Americans and settlers from other western European cultures had, by the late 1800s, intermingled with British linguistic heritage. Bradley's comments in "Shakespeare's America" indicate that he concurred.

In his Introduction to Cratis Williams' *Southern Mountain Speech*, Jim Wayne Miller points out that in Appalachia as in other regions of the country, subtle differences exist in the speech of people from different social and economic circumstances and in that of people from rural and urban areas (xi). Bradley acknowledges those differences by varying the language of speakers to their character, education, and background. The boy of "The Boy Speaks," for example, uses coarse language such as *bitch* and *God damn* as he casually orders M'liss to "fling [the slain wife's] body . . . on [a] bed." In contrast, the old mountain woman who peddles her crafts from her front porch speaks in more genteel dialect: "I made them myself, and they's none can show / such pretties."

Like scholars such as Josiah Combs and H. L. Mencken, Bradley admitted that despite its precision, power, and beauty mountain dialect was nonstandard ("Introduction" xii). Bradley anticipated criticism for acceptance of that linguistic paradox and for his extensive use of phonetic spelling. His answer to both criticisms is implied in the Preface to *Old Christmas*: "If I have failed [to capture the language accurately] it is in giving any adequate idea of the beauty of that spoken poetry one hears everywhere in the Cumberlands . . ." (ix).
The rich metaphor praised in the Harper's series is also replicated in Bradley's poetry, especially in the lyrical song ballads of Singing Carr. Typical of the figurative expressions are a "grey dawn that creeps slow-footed" through a mountain cabin in "The Sanger's Call"; the angels that burn like "candles glittering in a gale" in "Travels"; and the clouds that "pile tier on tier their snowy tents" in "St. Francis on Quicksand."

In addition to dialect and metaphor, Bradley includes in his poetry a component of oral folklore known as naming. Except for the fictitious names of Quarrelsome Creek for Troublesome Creek and Carson Town for Hindman, Bradley records accurately the names of towns that he visited, creeks that he passed, and mountains that he crossed. Many, such as Cutshin, Mouth o' Ball, Carr Creek, Pine Mountain, Quicksand, and Buckhorn still appear on Kentucky maps. Biblical names, used widely at the time of Bradley's visit, provide him with both titles for poems and names for characters: Prince of Peace, Saul, and David are examples. Bradley never refers to the highland region he visited as Appalachia, but always as the Cumberlands, a name Fischer says came from Cumberland County in England where the Duke of Cumberland defended the highlands at Culloden (640). An interesting example of naming in Bradley's poetry is the name of the title character in "Lake Erie's Demon Lover." Bradley explains that during the nineteenth century Lake Erie became a popular name for daughters of men who had fought under the command of Oliver Hazard Perry at Lake Erie during the War of 1812 ("In Shakespeare's America" 444), a claim
validated as late as 1994 by a Lexington Herald-Leader obituary for an elderly woman in a small Eastern Kentucky town: Her first name was Lake; her middle name was Erie. A more lasting tribute to Perry exists in the name of Perry County and its county seat, Hazard, both mentioned in Bradley's works.

Bradley's comments in "Shakespeare's America" imply a sincere admiration for both the heritage and beauty of mountain language. While phonetic spelling of regional pronunciations and "grammatical errors" occur more frequently than the reader may expect from comments in the Preface, the answer "to those who would accuse [him] of exaggeration," along with repeated praise for the language, underscore the author's honorable intent in his effort to reproduce the language for those not privileged to hear it.

Images, Allusions, and Other Poetic Devices

Prior to his sojourns in Kentucky, William Bradley had written three books on etching and several articles on wood engraving, edited a collection of songs and a catalog of a print collection, and translated Wanda Landowski's Music of the Past. His experience in the visual and auditory arts is evident in the imagery of Old Christmas and Singing Carr. "Stealthy steps" are heard in "The Fiddler." Morgan rides by a "rippling creek" and a "rustling wood." The little bell of the telephone makes "a tinkling sound" in "Singing Carr." His artistic eye catches the colors of both natural landscapes and material folk culture. A favored color combination is bright red contrasted with pure white. The maiden at "The
Doubles" is dressed "in white from her head to her foot," but rides a dark mule with a "saddle flowered with red," and a "gay crimson tassel" hung from its head. The aged bride of "The Sanger's Call" remembers selling the "seed that grows ripe and red" to buy yarn to spin white linen for a wedding dress as white as the snow that fell as she spun. The bride-to-be in "The British Lady" recalls seeing the bird known by that name as a "crimson stain" against the light cliffs along the creek. A hollybush is said to have flamed red amid white snows of winter in "Saul of the Mountains." The black-clad Men of Harlan are depicted riding single file against a contrasting landscape:

Down many a shelving ledge of shale, shirting the trembling sands,

Through many a pool and many a pass, where the mountain laurel stands

So thick and close to left and right, with holly bushes, too,

The clinging branches meet midway to bar the passage through —

O'er many a steep and stony ridge, o'er many a high divide.

Many of the images of natural landscapes are related to seasonal changes, often used to convey passing of time. The stranger in "The New Life" recalls arriving in June, "when the full creeks still sang in tune . . . and each green ridge, against the sky, / melted away in tender mist / of azure and amethyst." He
remembers "the heat / of those walled creeks!" which left no breath of air and the "towering creek walls" that "shut . . . out the skies." He recalls, as fall approached, looking out from his sick room upon "the oaks . . . turning fast" between the pines, "the creek, / . . . all on fire with tawny sedge," and "the ruddy oak-leaves burn[ing] / Like beacons." By the end of his story "the creek walls are] white with hoar," the ground frozen, and the rock-houses edged with "ice-fringes." Thermal images such as the sharp cold of the ice-fringed rock-house in winter and the airless heat between the towering cliffs in summer reinforce visual images in numerous poems. In "Old Christmas," for example, Jason and Judith Daughn's tale begins in spring when "the earth stir[s] / with sweet new life, in bud and bird, / in orchards bowering each abode" and "pink tipped laurel [has] drift[s] high along the rude creek wood." As the poem progresses, "fading leaves [begin] to fall, and dull skies, like a leaden pall, close down the creek." Finally, the coming of winter is indicated by a "sharp cold [that] set[s] in," and "the first frost [that] form[s] a thin black film of ice upon the creek." The cycle of the seasons also marks time for the lovers of "The Sanger's Call." The aged narrator tells of meeting her lover in fall, when the seed of the ginseng "grew ripe and red," of sharing a mountain cabin with her future groom as drifted snow covered the slopes where they had searched for "sang," and of preparing to wed when spring arrived. Like the Romantic poets of England, Bradley finds inspiration in pristine and colorful rural settings where natural beauty has yet to be corrupted by industrialism.
A frequently occurring image from material folk culture is the mountain cabin. Avoiding stereotypical images, Bradley describes dwellings of persons of varying economic and social characteristics. Images include both interior and exterior views, often with surroundings. The abode of the old woman who peddles her "pretties" from her porch is "a small cabin all bowered in green" with "walls . . . worn gray . . . [and] a yard . . . swept clean." The humble cabin sits on "a lane running down to the creek." The log-house of Judith Hall and Jason Daughn is surrounded by bushes bearing "all kinds of colored lilies." Judith's father, Hunt Hall, resides in "a big double log-house" surrounded by red paw-paws. An example of the less-attractive dwellings described by Bradley is the "rude cabin on the creek" where the brash mountain youth of "The Boy Speaks" takes "The Strange Woman." According to Fischer, log cabins were a "characteristic style of vernacular architecture in the Appalachian highlands" brought by the Scotch-Irish in the 1700s (655).

One of the most detailed interiors meets the eye of the traveler narrator of "The New Life" as he awakens from days of fever-induced unconsciousness see an

... oaken loom
That fills one end of the big room
From whose dim rafter vaguely [hang]
Bunches of onions, roots of sang,
Strings of dried shuckies, ears of corn,
Sunbonnets, clothes, a powder-horn —
A medley of strange mountain things.

From a rude peg a lanthorn swings,
While, on the fireboard, fastened high,
An old hog-rifle meets [his] eye,

Above a home-made dulcimore.

In "The New Life," Mahaly and her mother live in a mountain home set in a cove "amid a little grove / Of feathery locusts . . . and some gnarled apple-trees . . . with ripe red apples hanging high / [and] a row of bee-gums." The cabin is so neat and clean . . . [that the] spotless and white . . . cabin floor [shines], like the walls with paper hung." And "over the fire a kettle [swings], / with gleaming coppers in a row [that give] back an iridescent glow." Every bed is covered with "a coverlet of indigo / or madder . . ." Furnishings such as split-white oak chairs, fireboards, looms, and spinning wheels and outside additions such as dog runs, washing blocks, and cookhouses are among other artifacts that contribute to the motif.

Colorful images are also included in Bradley's description of his characters' attire, giving readers a glimpse of another aspect of mountain folk culture. When Jason Daughn first sees Judith Hall in the poem "Old Christmas," Judith is

A slim young thing press[ing] out the white
Sheep's wool, with whiter, glancing feet,
And with her hands, hold[ing] up the neat
Dark linsey skirt, so as to show
The gay red petticoat below.

In "Gambols on Gayly" Hiram, dressed for a dance, is "stiff in his boiled shirt;"

Haly's bare feet dangle from beneath a skirt "o' turkey red," and her head is
crowned with "a hat, with feathers from the town, / That sort o' slanted 'cross one
eye."

Both sound and sight are part of musical imagery. Billy More, the one-armed fiddler in "Gambols on Gayly" can play

Most without rest, all night and day,

Holding the bow between his knees,

And scraping, as easy as you please,

The strings across hit, and [can] sing,

Or blow on a mouth-organ thing

Both at one time.

The "wistful, wavering, mournful sound" of the fiddle and the sobs and cries of its
"soul" in response to the fiddler's bow are among Bradley's most vivid auditory
images.

Auditory and visual images merge in the beauty of the "dulcimore" that
David plays for "Saul of the Mountains,"

... the prettiest instrument,

Of best black walnut, shaped and bent

So slick, and boxed so tight and true,

With little wires, and horse's glue,
That 't was no wonder it could sing.
You only had to touch the thing,
To hear it, like it had a soul,
Whisper so soft, through each hearthole.
But when young David cut his quill,
And tightened up the strings, until
They was in tune, then you'd allow
A bird was shut inside somehow.
Singing his heart out, fit to die.

In "The New Life," a young mountain girl, who knows "of the old ballads a score," comes daily to sing and play her dulcimer for a visitor recovering from "mountain fever." So true is her music to its ancestral origins that the convalescent can almost see Fair Margaret's ghost seeking Sweet William's bed, as in the ballad. The aged narrator in "The Sanger's Call" recalls the ginseng pickers singing "many an old-time ballet song" as they climbed the hills in search of "sang." "The Blind Boy" entertains himself with his banjo music as he walks familiar mountain paths.

An image that recurs almost as frequently as those from music is the gun. Christmas revelers "shoot up the town" in "Old Christmas." Saul keeps a gun beside him while David plays for him. The Strange Woman and Lake Erie await abusive husbands at cabin doors — with guns. Faustus' hunting rifle reportedly has strange powers gained in a deal with the devil. Hiram Pickering grabs his "old
.30-.30" to rid himself of his rival Rome. Steel balls shot from rifle-guns are responsible for the deaths or "penetentiarying" in all of the feud poems. Whether for hunting or feuding — usually for both — the rifle-gun is an essential possession of nearly every mountain man, and several mountain women, in Bradley's poetry. The sight of their flame and the crack of their release contrasts with the softer images of music and nature.

In "The Child and the Rattler" the rhythm and words suggest the sound of children chanting as they act out the rattler's attack on an unsuspecting child. The colorful language evokes a clear image of the snake coiling and striking as the child shakes an admonishing finger, chanting "Bad old snake!" The sound of "singing streams" cheers the Blind Boy as he walks familiar mountains. The sound of water flowing "when the splash-head goes" cools the farmer in "Travels" after his vision of blazing hills. The whine of the Methodist hymns contrasts sharply with the joyful sound of the "Saints o' Carr's" singing on the line.

Bradley's sympathy for the Romantic, the Elizabethan, and the medieval is reflected in his allusions. Many allusions are to incidents or characters from folksongs and ballads, but a significant number are to stories and characters from sources that range from Biblical literature to American history. Allusions to folksongs and ballads include "The Cherry Tree Carol" in "Old Christmas," "The Demon Lover" and "The Two Daughters" in "Lake Erie's Demon Lover," and "Fair Margaret and Lord William" in "The New Life." Poems alluding to stories or characters from Biblical or church history include "At Parting" (Elisha and the
Shunammite Woman), "Saul of the Mountains" (Saul and David), "Prince o' Peace," and "St. Francis on Quicksand." "At Parting" is a mountain woman's farewell to a departing lover who must "return to the world of men." In an allusion to the story of Elisha and the Shunammite woman, the speaker tells of her husband's construction of a chamber for this good man who goes his way "that he might return when in need of rest or kindness." The allusion is continued as she compares herself to "one who did love her prophet well." The final part of the allusion is her declaration that since their child will "never know his father's name," she will call him by "Elisha's name" — an allusion to the Old Testament prophet housed and cared for by a Shunammite woman.

Both "A Mountain Faustus" and "Lake Erie" allude to the Faustus legend. In "The Mountain Angel" allusions to the French Court, Trianon, and Marie Antionette, highlighted by the use of French words, emphasize the title character's nobility and grace in contrast to the rustic mountain background. The lords, ladies, pages, and squires; the damask wall hangings and silken gowns; and "crown of state" of "Little Leatherwood's Dream" form an extended allusion to the medieval English court as depicted by Sir Walter Scott and other early Romantics. Rare allusions to American history are found in mention of Rebels and Home Guards in "A Mountain Faustus" and "Morgan's Men." In most instances, however, Bradley turns for allusions, as well as for form and storyline, to the early history and literature of Britain.
One of Bradley's techniques calls to mind the Homeric epic. In the context of his poems, he employs cataloging, a memory aid from the oral folk epic, to record significant items of the customary and material culture of the Cumberlands. Several lists name folksongs, ballads, hymns, and tunes played by fiddlers for dancing. One such list appears in "The Ballad Collector" in the guise of the host's enumeration of "them songs [his] children sings": "Lone an' Lonesome Low,"


"The Prince o' Peace" provides a list of most of the region's religious sects: the Hard Shells who meet in the old log school; the Free Will Men that think "a feller [has] a chance to save his soul, 'cause he [don't] dance or drink or swear or shoot or sing or with the women take his fling," the "pale, lily-livered Methodists;" and the Softshells, the "only group to whom Ezra did not preach." The only sect not listed is the Regular Baptists. Bradley probably thought it unnecessary to list
"Old Reg'lars" since they are named in numerous other poems. The Cumberlands were such a stronghold of the "Reg'lars" at the time of Bradley's visit that the denominational publication The Sword and Shield was published in Hindman from 1912-1916 (Combs 37).

Other poems contain lists of artifacts of the material culture. "Old Christmas" includes names of favorite quilt patterns. "The New Life" includes lists of foods — canned fruit, cushaws, "service berry," crab apple tinctured with wild cherry, freshly-churned butter, cornbread, and whiskey — brought to the ill visitor by mountain homemakers from "their slender mountain store." Fischer lists many of those same items in his discussion of eastern Kentucky food. The buildings of Carson Town, the setting of "Little Leatherwood," are the structures found in most mountain villages: a schoolhouse, a jailhouse, a courthouse, a lawyer's office, a churchhouse, and a storehouse. Double-log houses with the dog-run between the two structures, rude mountain cabins, log barns, washhouses, smokehouses, springhouses, mills, and other structures are mentioned throughout the two volumes of verse. A compilation of the trees, crops, farm implements, household tools, musical instruments, articles of clothing, weapons, farm animals, and forest creatures named throughout Bradley's poetry yields a fairly comprehensive list of man-made and natural elements of the Cumberland culture.
Topics, Themes, and Characters

Bradley's expressed purpose in writing the articles for Harper's and the poems that followed was to describe the landscape, the people, the customs, the language, and the music of the Cumberlands to his contemporaries — to capture the spirit of the culture rather than to comment on it. He presents the places, characters, events, and other material of mountain life as pictures in an album or chronicles in a diary designed more to evoke memories than to convey messages. Nevertheless, recurring themes do emerge, especially in tales of feuds, death, courtship and marriage, and religion and superstition.

Feuds and Other Wars

In the Cumberlands of the early twentieth century, families were large and tended to live close to one another, fostering a strong sense of clan loyalty. Fischer suggests that both feuds and family loyalty had their roots in the border violence of the Scottish highlands, where weak law and loose social order led people with common ancestors to bond together for protection (629). In the Cumberlands, as in the Scottish highlands, "blood loyalty" was stronger than marriage ties; perhaps, Fischer believes, even stronger than ties to God or country (Fischer 629). Forceful and charismatic leaders evoked an almost "amoral obligation" from their kin (Fischer 629). Bradley reports that while most of the
big feuds that had flourished in such an atmosphere were finished by the time of
his visit, lesser ones still existed.

Feuds that he witnessed or heard about form the plot or the background in
Fiddler," and "Sourwood Mountain." The feud in "A Mountain Faustus" stems
from Civil War rivalries as, according to many historians, did a number of the real-
life feuds.

"Ed Callahan" and "The Fiddler" are based on feuds that occurred at or near
the time of Bradley's visit. Bradley had personal knowledge of at least one of
those feuds. When he was planning his trip to Kentucky, a friend who had
recently returned from a visit to the region told of being given a letter of
introduction to the postmaster at Jackson, who proved to be a relative of the
Marcums of the Hargis-Marcum feud. The postmaster's cousin Jim was "well-
fixed to take strangers," a common custom in a region with few hotels. But the
postmaster advised Bradley's friend not to stay there, since the Hargis clan was
waiting to "plug" the cousin if he came outside. According to the postmaster,
neither side would intentionally shoot a stranger, but "you never can rightly tell
what will happen when they's a war on . . ." ("Song Ballets"17). Consequently,
Bradley's friend went to another boarding house, which turned out to be run by
Hargis relatives. The shot that killed J. B. Marcum was later fired from an upper
window at that house. Bradley's friend claimed to have shared a room in the
house with Little Curtis Jett who was later sent to prison for his part in the killing ("Hobnobbing" 97).

Coincidentally, Bradley heard "The Assassination of J. B. Marcum" being sung on the street by an old fiddler on the night of his arrival in Berea. The final chapter in the Hargis-Marcum feud occurred during Bradley's visit. Ed Callahan, the sheriff of Breathitt County and "Hargis's man in that county," was shot by the Marcums at his store in Crocketsville near Buckhorn ("Song Ballets" 7). Bradley recalls passing the store where the shooting took place on his way to Booneville on the day after Callahan's death. When he stopped to take a photograph, someone came out of a nearby house and ordered him to stop. Bradley reports that the trial of Callahan's assassins, which may have been one of the last great feud trials in Kentucky, took place in Winchester during the time of his visit ("Hobnobbing" 97-98).

"Ed Callahan" is Bradley's poetic version of the death that ended the famous feud. The event was reported in newspapers throughout the country, but Bradley's version is based on accounts he heard from local residents. As Callahan lay dying at Buckhorn School, where he had been taken following the shooting, he shocked the "friends of Hargis, White, and Jett, and all that bloody crew" by sending a messenger to relatives waiting to retaliate: "Tell 'em to quit." Those words ended what columnist John Ed Pearce names as "the last and bloodiest feud in Kentucky" (45).
Another poem in which the feud provides the main storyline is "Will Warner." The poem tells the story of the fourth son of the Warner clan to be killed by a Darrell. It opens just after the title character has been "shot in the back at the courthouse square" by the clan that had earlier killed his three brothers: "Jeff, as he drank at the creekside spring," "Ned at the plough," and "Cal as he rode to his infaring." Now, Will Warner, having killed a Darrell, has "evened the score" and "a death for a death the dogs [Darrells] have paid." "Fult Faithorne" tells of another evening of a score between rival clans. That poem opens with Faithorne's ride into the lair of the enemy Erne-Ely clan. His entrance sends women and children fleeing to hide in their cabins. Faithorne proceeds to shoot down "two Elys at their gate" and then to ride back home, having "cleaned the slate."

Feuds are woven into the plots of several other tales. The main characters of "Old Christmas" flee from their feuding families; Little Leatherwood, who had "put the county trouble down" several years prior to the main plot of the poem, "wouldn't hear a' starting up the war again" even when the rival French family killed his father. When Big Bill Blent "who'd quit the army, started in / To shoot the town up [and] raised old sin" Leatherwood exhorted the troublemaker,

... Son,

I sort o' hate to spoil your fun,

But things is different here to-day,

'Right smart, from when you went away.
In "The Fiddler" Bradley shows that there were innocent victims of feuds: The Fiddler is shot by the Dean clan for ignoring their warnings against staying with the Hales of Harlan on his way to play for a Christmas festivity at "Breaks o' Ball." The creation of such a character may have been suggested by the warning to Bradley's friend that an outsider who got too near either of the feuding parties might be in danger.

The same lawless social and political climate in which justice-by-feud-wars thrived also fostered settlement of domestic or individual disputes by violence. Disputes over women are settled by raid or ambush in "Saul of the Mountains," "A Mountain Faustus," and "Gambols on Gayly." Domestic or personal disputes are settled at gunpoint in "The Boy Speaks," "The Sanger's Call," "Morgan's Men," and "Sourwood Mountain."

Along with local clan wars, the wars of the nation found their way into mountain ballads and consequently into William Bradley's poetry. At the time of Bradley's visit, interest in the war had made its way even into isolated mountain communities. "The Feudist" tells his visitor that even though "folks on Folger's Fork / . . . don't go stirring much abroad, [and] can scarcely read the news," they are concerned about their boys having "to go / away across the briny deep." The ballad collector is welcomed because his host "want[s] to hear him talk about the war."

The young woman who sees a British Ladybird as she walks beside a mountain creek and laments the untimely death of her lover brings to mind the
lament of the heroine of "Patterns" when war claims her husband-to-be. Although the war is not identified, it, too, may have been the First World War — especially if the incident is based on Bradley's personal observation. Past wars, however, were still much-remembered in the mountains. The Civil War figures prominently in both "Morgan's Men" and "A Mountain Faustus."

Death

Most deaths in Bradley's poetry are feud-related. Bradley informs his readers that the feud-related deaths were referred to as killings, never as murders ("Hobnobbing" 97). He also reports that killings did not always occur in two-man shootings, but were often accomplished by ambush. An ambush is attempted in "A Mountain Faustus." When Bill Martin realizes Jake Sykes is in Allafair's cabin, he wakes "all the fellers." Each ally comes out with gun in hand, following Sykes "from place to place" until the group is large enough "to face / An army, let alone one man." Then they run to Abner's Creek and make "a circle round / The log-house . . . while two go up to call out the intended victim." An ambush is anticipated in "Ed Callahan." As their leader lies dying, the clan hides in the woods, awaiting his command to ambush his killer. Even deaths that are not feud-related usually occur by gunshot. The most-common weapon is the muzzle-loading rifle that hangs above the fireboard in many cottages. The victim of a shooting is usually a male; the killer is usually a rival suitor as in "Gambols on Gayly" or a spouse as in "The Strange Woman."
In reality, deaths such as those of Hi's six "puny" children in "Gambols on Gayly" and of the starving infant in "Lullaby" probably outnumbered deaths by gunshot. "Gambols on Gayly" implies that Hi's children died because they lacked nourishment and health care. In "Lullaby," a mountain mother sings to her starving infant, imploring it not to cry, promising, in vain, that "though [her] breast be dry," the child's pappy will soon bring meat and corn so she can feed "her precious sugar sweet." The fate of such children is one of the more sorrowful themes of Bradley's verse.

In two poems the form of death wears an alluring disguise. "The Child and the Rattler" chronicles the death of an innocent and trusting child by the strike of a rattlesnake. The unsuspecting child invites the snake, "come here closer, if you wish, / eat with me from my own dish." When the child realizes that the snake intends to eat all of her food, she patiently explains, "That's your side, right over there!" When the snake pays no heed, she threatens, as she might to a playmate or sibling, "I'll hit you, then, old speckly-head!" The snake retaliates and, having done its evil, glides away. Unaware that her wound is fatal, the child warns "I'll tell daddy, when I wake," and "He'll kill you . . . bad old . . . snake!" In "The Doubles" death appears in the guise of a maiden dressed in pure white (with warning trims of red). The rider recognizes her true identity only when he sees her image indirectly mirrored in the pool.

Although universal themes are infrequent in Bradley's poetry, a representation of trusting inhabitants of the Cumberlands, deceived by businessmen
seeking rights to usurp their resources in ways that threaten mountain culture, is certainly possible. Letters or essays yield no clues, but they do contain discussions of both the positive and negative impact of education and industrialization. In most poems, however, death is presented in the fashion of the traditional balladeers — without comment or sentimentality.

Dreams, Visions, and Spells

In the early 1900s dreams, visions, and trances were considered significant omens by many inhabitants of the Cumberlands. Bradley's interest in tales of dreams or visions was no doubt strengthened by his memory of the dreamlike sensation he had experienced upon entering the mountains. The traveler in "The New Life" who descends through Pine Gap into "the translucent atmosphere and . . . silence" of the hills might well have been Bradley. Stopping to speak to a lone horseman, the traveler is overcome by the feeling that they are "two travelers in another age," that "history [has] turned back her page." Later, as the character drifts between consciousness and sleep while recuperating from "mountain fever," his caregiver's "eager, vivid, dreaming, face / haunt[s] his dream," and "every care . . . slip[s] away." Later, a dream brings Mally, the mountain girl with whom he has fallen in love, to halt his departure.

A reader of "Old Christmas" is never sure whether the visitors seeking shelter on Old Christmas Eve were real or "a vision sent . . . to fill her heart and ease her pain." In "Saul of the Mountains," David forgets "himself in dreams o'
Sue" as he plays for Saul who lies "tranced and still." Like Scheherazade's stories, David's music casts a spell that protects him, in this case from Saul's jealousy.

Some dreams are flights of imagination reminiscent of romantic poetry such as "Kubla Khan" and "Christabel." Young Leatherwood experiences "a swarm" of such dreams. One is related in vivid detail: Young Leatherwood rides to a cabin on a creek where a disembodied voice commands him to dismount and put on a "silken gown." He is then led into "a hall ablaze with torches" where "lords, ladies, pages, and squires" dance amid "damask-covered walls, hung with silken banners" that "shiver and shake as . . . dancers swing" to the strains of "fiddles and dulcimores." Finally, the "damsel" becomes visible. Her "eyes [are] like stars" and her "braided hair . . . [shines] like corn, when summer air ripples across it." She leads Leatherwood to a cove of beech trees where "lovers walk and talk of love" in a setting worthy of Keats or Coleridge. So real is the dream that for days after awakening, Young Leatherwood "holds [the damsel] as close as when he dreamed" and continues to sense her "warmth and glow."

Maria Dillon, mother of "The Prince o' Peace," falls into a trance during Uncle Ezra's sermon and is enveloped by "a soft white cloud." The mountain farmer in "Travels [from Nature to Grace]" is converted by visions of angels in his cornfield. A "sight o' pretty sounds" make the Blind Boy dream, "till [he] forget[s], almost, that [he is] blind." The narrator of "The Mountain Angel" tells the object of his affection that she will "stay in [his mind], like the little town, a haunt of memory, a dream."
Other dreams are not so pleasant. A dream warns the bride of "The Sanger's Call" of her groom's impending death. She recalls that more than once, as she lay abed, she sprang up in fear as she saw her "lover dead, / with his red slayer standing by," then "woke and heard a warning cry." The strange woman wonders "What spell was on [her] when [she] wed / [the] brutal boy . . .?" Lake Erie's demon doctor is rumored to have put girls into trances with his evil eyes. The hunting companions of Bill Martin report seeing the "moon reel behind wild clouds," feeling "cold shivers" through their bodies, and observing animals act in strange ways when the Mountain Faustus casts his devilish spells. A rider who stops at "The Doubles" of Carr Creek encounters "a vision of death mirrored in the pool."

The dream, vision, trance, and spell motif in Bradley's poetry has many faces: flights of fantasy, warnings of death, escapes from troubles, protection from enemies, and interventions of fate. They reflect both the author's observations of a cultural phenomenon and his state of mind.

Courtship and Marriage

Another aspect of mountain culture described by Bradley is love, courtship, and marriage. In several poems Bradley depicts relationships doomed by conflicting cultures. Three poems involve a "furrin" man, for whom leaving the mountains means leaving a woman he has come to love. The only implication of a happy ending to a love story involving individuals from conflicting cultures occurs
in "A New Life." When the convalescing stranger falls in love with the "little maid" who comes daily to sing and play for him, he finds happiness and healing for his troubled spirit. Then he discovers that she is courted by a young mountain boy. Convinced that "all he loved [is] lost," the visitor decides that he must go. As he leaves the village, however, he is met on the road by his beloved mountain maid, whose "one long and desperate kiss" convinces him that the life "that he'd once thought was done . . . [had] only just begun."

Relationships between outsiders and natives usually have sad but nostalgic endings. The outsider in "At Parting" must leave a beloved mountain woman who bears a child that he will never see. "At Parting" is a farewell spoken by the woman to the love whose child she will have after his departure:

"Dear love, ah well I know

I cannot keep thee, thou must go

Back from me to the world of men.

Nor are we like to meet again."

And though the woman promises to keep a room prepared for her departing lover, she admits sadly that "our child will never know his father's name."

"The Mountain Angel" is a farewell speech to a nurse who, like the speaker, came to the mountains as an outsider, but unlike him, has been accepted into the mountaineers' world and will remain in Carson Town. As the visitor takes his leave, he expresses hope that when he returns to Carson Town he will find the Mountain Angel still there, wearing the striped gown and snowy kerchief of her
nurse's uniform, still "an angel minist'ring . . . her miracles of healing art with / deep clairvoyance of 'that strange, wayward mountain heart'," by "her noble doing and helpful ways."

The theme of love thwarted by conflicting cultures is developed from a different perspective in the companion poems "The Strange Woman" and "The Boy Speaks." "The Strange Woman" is a schoolteacher who describes herself as a "foreign fool / Who came to teach a mountain school, / And married one of their own men." "Lonely unto death, / Longing for love, no longer young," she at first found her husband "a boy to take the breath." Although she had thought it would be "sweet to teach / Him gentler ways [and] gentler speech," she soon found herself instead driven by shame to beg for marriage when she bore his child. Eventually, feeling no more than a "cabin slave . . . driven hopeless down to hell," she stands in the cabin door, loaded gun in hand, asking God to "send [her] strength tonight to make an end / of him — and [her]."

The husband picks up the narrative in "The Boy Speaks." He addresses his companion M'lis, probably the harlot that his wife accuses him of bringing home in "The Strange Woman," telling her that he would "rather hug [her] a sight" than the nagging wife he has just killed. According to his story, his wife had made a fool of him from the day in school when she first kissed him. He claims that she had "only wanted a man to make her have a kid or two." After the marriage, she "took a fit" every time he had a drink, "as if she thought a man [couldn't] never take his dram." He admits that he "run her pretty hard," but says he "never
thought the bitch was one / to take a turn like that" — until he found her "stand[ing] there in the dog-run, gun in hand." After commenting to M'liss, "She's gone now, at last, God damn / her soul!" he enlists the aid of his new lover to fling the body on a bed (while they sleep on another) — being careful, of course, not to "wake the kid."

In a variation on the theme of love between natives and outsiders, Bradley tells the story of Lake Erie, a quiet girl with "a heap o' notions . . . ."

'Bout what a wishful gal can do
'Sides staying at home and gitting wed
To the first boy that turns her head,
Then spending all her life right here,
Bearing a baby every year,
Until she feeds and rears a score,
And never stirring from her door
To go as far as Perkins Mill."

Lake Erie is the victim of two men, her Demon Lover Jimpson Stote and her father Cal. When Lake wants to go to school, Cal "curse[s] / His daughter for a god-dammed fool . . . yank[s] her out o' school." Deprived of her goal to become a nurse, Lake begins to learn nursing skills from Doc Jimpson Stote, who "has . . . studied down to Louisville." Unaware of the dapper physician's rumored "witch-like ways" and unsavory past, Lake falls "dead in love" with him. Convinced that he has Lake's "body and soul," Stote returns to his old habits of "lead[ing] . . . gals
to sin." At first disheartened, Lake eventually recovers her spirit and moves to a cabin "that furrin' folks had built and left near the mouth o' Rocky Cleft." When the evil doctor follows her there, she meets him "in the door / with his best gun" until the coward "kindly [slinks] away." The narrator claims that the doctor "hain't been back there since that day." The poem closes with the admirable Lake free to "doctor" and "wait on folks a sight."

Bradley's tales of love, like those of the folk songs and ballads, usually involve tragedy, even when the lovers share cultural roots. The relationship of the couple who fell in love while collecting "sang" ends violently at the hand of an enemy. The aged mountain woman recalls how the dark-haired boy, who in their youth had saved her from a snake as they picked ginseng, was killed by an enemy's arrow as he returned from a trip to get their "marriage papers."

"Gambols on Gayly" is a lighthearted tale of love in the mountains that closes on a note of humor — but only after two lovers' triangles have been untangled by a significant amount of shooting! The first triangle is eliminated when, with a little help from his rifle, widower and storekeeper Hiram Pickering wins Mahaly, one of the wild gals on Gayly, from a younger suitor. That action creates a second triangle when Hat, sister of Hi's previous wife and his housekeeper since his wife's death, declines to be displaced by "some young flighty emptyhead!" That triangle ends when Hat goes on a shooting rampage at Hi's pre-wedding dance. During the mêlée, the bride is abducted by her former suitor, leaving Hi to the darkly humorous fate of marriage to "a widow who turn[s] out to
Another triangle develops in "A Mountain Faustus" when two long-time friends become enemies in an attempt to "court" the same girl.

You see, Bill and Jake Sykes was friends

... [until] both the pair

Began to talk with Allafair. . . .

But when Bill Martin sees that Allafair favors Jake Sykes, "he search[es] his mind . . . to find some sneaking way to turn her heart." The situation is complicated when "tidings of the [Civil] war" come to the hills and the rivals take opposite sides. But despite gun battles, chases through the woods, and Bill Martin's attempts at occult intervention, Jake marries Allifair and even saves the soul of his former friend in another light-hearted ending.

The words of the characters in Bradley's tales of love and marriage reveal mountain attitudes toward gender roles. Fischer believes gender roles of mountain culture have roots in the British borderland cultures where men were warriors, often away from home defending their country or their clan, leaving women to care for farms and animals as well as for homes and children (676). In his opinion, that cultural phenomenon left a paradoxical relationship in which women shared equally in the physical labor on the mountain farm but were expected to be obedient and submissive to their husbands' or fathers in other ways. Lake Erie's father Cal is a stereotypical example of the mountain man who fears loss of control of "his" women who might gain independence and new ideas from education.

Pine-blind, [he'll] nevēr have a whore
Among his gals. And yet he gave
Each o' the rest to be a slave
To some dull, drunken, shiftless lout
Who'd mostly beat his wife about.

....

And drink, and fight, and stay in jail.

Mostly the others [husbands] used to roam
Leaving their women to chop and hoe,
While they from town to town would go,
And drink, and fight, and stay in jail.

The stranger in "The New Life," who in many ways resembles Bradley, laments the future he foresees for the young maiden who sings to him during his recuperation. He fears that she, like many women in the region, will be doomed to

... lose her free, proud poise some day,

Yet [he knows] it [is] the mountain way,

With women, worn by heavy toil,

Chained down like chattels to the soil

A less extreme example of the insensitive and controlling mountain man is Hiram Pickering of "Gambols on Gayly." He admits cursing his first wife for being a "plaguy doggone fool" who wastes her time on "flowerpots" and other "strange tricks learned at Carson School." But he admits the flowers she planted now come in handy for courting his third woman!
Bradley's poems also reflect the British borderland custom of abduction of a bride by her groom. In addition to Mahaly's abduction in "Gambols on Gayly," abductions occur in "Old Christmas," "Fult Faithorne," and "Prince o' Peace." Sometimes abduction stories also reveal the *laissez-faire* attitude toward formal marriage rites. In "Gambols on Gayly," for example, Jerome takes Haly directly from Hi's dance to live "up yonder ... on Quarrelsome." There seems to be no haste to marry, but

if a preacher-man should come,

Some day, to hold a preaching there,

Jerome and Haly both declare

They'll have the biggest wedding ever

Been seen on forks o' Kaintuck River!

The "Prince o' Peace" abducts a spirited girl who "kick[s] and bite[s] and [tears] his hair," but he "tame[s] her there and then!" His "tamed" mate "loves him from that day" and [rides] "with him and his wild clan"; no mention is made of marriage. After falling in love in the fall, the sang pickers in "The Sanger's Call" share a cabin until spring, postponing marriage until the "dark-haired boy" can more easily travel to the nearest town for their "marriage papers."

A few stories depict the more positive side of love in the Cumberlands. The tale of Judith Hall and Jason Daughn is set in a well-tended cabin filled with handcrafted furniture from mountain trees. Together the couple tend their sheep and hoe their fields in an idyllic existence. Respect and mutual concern are also

Religion

Among the customs and beliefs recorded in Old Christmas and Singing Carr are those related to religious observances, holidays, festivals, and other special events. The observance described in greatest detail is that of Old Christmas. The poem of that title describes the celebration of Christmas on January 6, the date still considered by many at the time of Bradley's visit, as the birthday of Christ. The custom had been brought to the new world by British settlers who refused to accept Parliament's change, in 1752, from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar (Caudill).

Many ancestors of the people living in the Cumberlands had thought the change "impious" and refused to accept it. Some inhabitants may even have settled in the isolated mountains of the new world before the change and thus been unaware of it (Caudill 439). "They's heaps o' folks [in the mountains who] still believe" that at one minute after midnight on Old Christmas "the elders bloom . . . and critters low and kneel . . . in every stall." From the original Old Christmas legend, as from many ballads and tales, a new version evolved, incorporating a local incident. On Old Christmas Eve, Judith Daughn, now dead "these years agone," was awakened by an "old man . . . whose gray beard most swept the
ground...and a lass" seeking shelter from a winter storm. After settling them in the Daughns' warm shed, Judith dozed again until she was awakened by "music heard far off" and "dazzling light" from a star "straight over the shed." There she found "an old man sleeping beside a lass with a newborn baby at her breast." Judith fell into a trance, and upon awakening, found herself cured of a long-suffered malaise brought on by childlessness.

As the poem continues, the listener learns that Judith, like many mountain people, did not fully understand the meaning of her vision, for although she had learned "The Cherry Tree," the Renaissance ballad about Mary and Joseph from which the poem's epigraph is taken, "A-setting on her mammy's knee./...She'd not heard/o' Bible stories ary word;" she had "no idea what them words mean[t] 'bout Virgin Mary being Queen o' Galilee and babies born...on Christmas morn," for "they was no foreign preacher-men came to [the] mountains" in those days. And though Judith and Jason lived quietly and "peaceful-like," for many folks in that valley

...Christmas,...was but a day
When boys and gals grew rude and gay,
And men and women drank their store
O' licker, played the dulcimore,
And danced, and sang, and shot some, too.

In magazine accounts of his visit, Bradley reports that such celebrations, as well as the legends, of Old Christmas were probably brought from Britain where
fireworks and gunplay were a customary part of Christmas celebration ("Shakespeare's America" 439). The celebration of Christmas by dance and revelry is mentioned again in "The Fiddler." The title character is on his way to Breaks o' Ball to play for a "Christmas tree" at a "dancers' hall" with a musical repertoire more secular than sacred.

The raucous mix of fiddling, dancing, and gunplay also marked other religious occasions. It occurs at Hi and Mahaly's wedding in "Gambols on Gayly" and at the revival meeting in "Prince o' Peace." It is even part of in the funeral of Saul's wife in "Saul of the Mountains,"

the feistiest funeral ever on [that] fork.

Ten Baptist preachers came to talk —

... and there was a sight

O' folks who stayed and drank all night —

Some shooting, too . . . .

The event may have been patterned after a funeral described to Bradley by a woman he met during his visit ("Women on Troublesome" 321). According to her account, people sat on the ground or on "rude sapling benches;" men talked of politics, horse trading, and moonshine peddling. Women dressed in their "Sunday best" for one of their few social occasions. At the particular service described to Bradley, the "bereaved widder" and his new wife sat in front of the preacher, who had married them several months after the last wife's death ("Women on Troublesome" 321). For an hour the preacher spoke in "trembling tones and
uncertain accents," offering words of consolation to family. Next, he launched into a "discourse on immortality and resurrection" which finally ended with a warning about the consequences of living a sinful life ("Women on Troublesome" 323). After stopping to remove his coat and wipe his forehead, he launched into a second discourse filled with "bizarre mystical metaphors." At the close of the second hour, he sat down at last, only to have the next preacher arise and begin his admonitions and commentaries ("Women on Troublesome" 323).

Both the revival meeting of "Prince o' Peace" and the Decoration Day of "Gambols" illustrate the impact that the scarcity of preachers exerted on religious customs. Similar to the Memorial Day celebrations described in Thomas' Southern Appalachia, Hi's Decoration Day combines elements of a mountain funeral and a modern Memorial Day service (453). There was no fixed date for such celebrations; they were held, by necessity, when a traveling preacher happened to pass through the area (Thomas 153). Sometimes so much time elapsed between a burial and the subsequent funeral that, as in "Gambols" and "Women on Troublesome," a widow or widower attended a spouse's memorial in the company of the mate's successor. The gravesite described in "Gambols" is typical of those described by Josiah Combs. Combs says that eastern Kentucky graveyards are "beautiful spots . . . on the summit of . . . some low-ridge mountain land" (31). Will Warner's graveyard, "up the hillside" above the mountain cabin where he dies, depicts the custom of locating burial grounds on a hill near family property.
The itinerant preachers who came to conduct funerals, weddings, and revivals were often as rowdy as their congregations, showing equal passion for whiskey, women, and religious fervor. The narrator of "Prince o' Peace" rationalizes for Uncle Ezra by explaining that since "preachers, has got a hide / like common men . . . they must have their little dream / same as the rest."

Despite human weaknesses, Uncle Ezra has read the scriptures through and claims special knowledge of "ways mapped for man." His belief that "all the nations is working out along God's plan" is typical of the Calvinist philosophy brought to the Cumberlands from the Scottish Highlands. The preacher's gifts include the ability to "sling words about, wrestle in prayer, . . . line out hymns . . . [and] wash feet," common parts of "Regular" Baptist worship. Lining out hymns, a practice in which the minister called out each line before the congregation sang it, substituted for the modern hymnbook in the largely illiterate congregations.

Ezra claims that during one of his "meetings" the Holy Ghost appeared in the form of "a snow-white bird a-circling . . . a-bove his head" causing a matron in the congregation to jump and cry aloud. "Fetch[ing] her hand to her left side" she fell immediately "flat on the ground like she [was] dead" and was surrounded by a cloud. On the following day, the woman gave birth to a boy-child, whom she declared had no earthly father (though her husband "kindly grinned at that"). Ezra proclaimed the boy a child of God, and people came from miles around to sing hymns, give money, and throw their guns and bottles on the ground in a gesture of peace. But, the "holy" child progressed from "cussing" at age two to burning the
jail at age ten, and was eventually run out of town. Finally, the boy's lawless behavior forced Ezra to admit the error of his prophecy, give up claims of a Heavenly Kingdom on the creek, and "let things go / like they's intended, here below."

Old Uncle Ezra, though to some degree an exaggerated stereotype of the hard-drinking, loud-shouting, mountain evangelist, is modeled after real mountain preachers. Bradley may have personally observed such an evangelist or just heard reports from those who had attended an all-day meeting, where emotionally-charged preaching, the essence of worship for the Old Regular Baptists, led women to "howl and cry." According to Josiah Combs, the "intense feeling and tenacious dogma" expressed at such meetings had little impact on everyday life (26). The "Old Reg'lars" considered paying preachers and supporting missionaries sinful and believed secular music was a "prelude to wantonness, bawdy language, and bad company" (Combs 28). It was they who gave ballads the name of devils ditties. Yet they tolerated the making and selling of moonshine and other "sundry evils" ("Women on Troublesome" 321).

One of the unusual religious customs practiced by the sect is described in the poem "Singing Carr." The "saints" of the families on Carr Creek gathered to sing on the telephone lines, a tradition described in prose in "Song Ballets and Devil's Ditties" (917). The narrator points out that unlike those who sing and play secular "ballets and devil's ditties," the "Saints o' Carr" sing "no sinful songs, nor ballets new an' fine / but spread the Gospel far an' nigh', by singing on the line."
The words and rhythm of the opening line of the poem, "Now glory to the Lord o' Hosts from whom all glories are," calls to mind the first line of the Doxology. The "saints" particularly enjoy songs traditionally sung at mountain funerals, such as "Been a Long Time Travelling," although such tunes make them "shiver [with] thoughts of death when they sing them on the line." While the saintly singers object to "sinful songs," they take a more tolerant attitude toward secular beverages, "pass[ing] the bottle round" as they wait for the phone to ring. When the ring comes, however, each takes a turn at listening, to "slake" his soul with "wine that flow[s] from lips o' Saints o' Carr, a-singing on the line." In their opinion, "no corn licker" is "half so good, so pure, so sweet, so strong / as music made by Saints o' Carr in some old Gospel song." In comparison, the narrator deems the singing of the Methodists only "a dismal whine."

A less fervent but more consoling minister speaks in "The Feudist on the War." He assures mothers whose sons have left home to cross the ocean on ships to fight the war, that God will keep the ones they love "as safely in his care / as though [they were] on some green point . . . above the waving fields of com and underneath the sky." The minister likely represents the more mainstream religions which Bradley observed — perhaps Reformed Presbyterian or Methodists (Fischer 621).

In several poems Bradley reminds readers that superstition and belief in magic existed alongside, and sometimes within the context of, Christianity. Before being cured of her malaise by a religious experience, Judith Daughn "sought a
witch that lived near by" and learned "magic charms to croon at night" in the hope of conceiving a child. Lake Erie's Demon Lover was said to have sold his soul to the devil in return for satanic powers. Bill Martin, the Mountain Faustus, too, had done "a heap o' fancy tricks / That warn't in nature..." The tale of "A Mountain Faustus" begins when the narrator asks a "foreign" visitor whether he has read about "some chap sold his soul to hell?" When the visitor responds, "Faust?", the storyteller surmises that the "furriner's" Faust "warn't same / as him that lived round here..." "That feller," he says, "called hisself Bill Martin." Like Faust, Bill Martin had traded his soul to Satan in return for power to cast spells.

The co-existence of superstition and a fatalistic Christianity that Bradley encountered in the Cumberlands is played out in the story of the Mountain Mother. The tale begins with a ritual reminiscent of pre-Christian Britain. When the woman's husband is killed by an enemy clan on the night of her son's birth, the mother arises from childbirth, dons her husband's clothes, prepares a mixture of her husband's blood and her breast milk, and feeds it to her newborn son "to make him strong for his dead father's sake." The tale ends as the son, having been instructed by his mother throughout his youth in the skills of feud warfare, loses his own life while avenging his father's death. The mother, who marked the beginning of her son's life with a pagan-like ritual, now marks its end with affirmation of Calvinistic predestination. She is content to die knowing that it is "all in God's plan."

Religious conversions are depicted in two stories. The first is an exaggerated account of a farmer's emotional conversion by a vision in "Travels
from Nature to Grace]." The farmer's travels are not from one mountain community to another, but from a natural state of sin to one of grace — perhaps another reflection of the Calvinistic spirit of Scotch ancestors. Seeing his hillside cornfield turn to flame and "a million angels shining like stars, clapping hands, singing, crying . . . glory to God, the King o' Kings, . . . shaking with wings rustling like corn that starts to shock an' tassel," the farmer falls to his knees and tries to pray or sing a hymn, but finds himself struck mute "as if under a spell." When the vision fades, the farmer proclaims that "the Devil had [him] in his power" and that he feared being damned if the Devil won the struggle." But he says that when the "torment cease[d], he was flooded" with a "tide o' peace," a love "[sprang] up for all [his] foes" with whom he will now "sit down and eat," and even "kneel an' wash their feet." During the vision, it also "came on" him that he must testify in a public meeting how he "had sinned through life, swore, lied, got drunk, and beat [his] wife." But now he is "forgiven / By them bright angels, come from heaven!" "A Mountain Faustus" begins with allusions to the Faustus legend, places a local tale in that context, then builds to a lighthearted and humorous ending with the narrator's report that the title character "jined" the Reg'lars and "got to heaven by a squeak."

Bradley's readers should recall his reminder that his verses are based on selected incidents and characters that caught his fancy and are not intended to be either typical or comprehensive in their representation of mountain life (Old Christmas ix). They should also keep in mind that church-houses are mentioned in
several poems, such as "Little Leatherwood" and "The Feudist," implying that some communities practiced their religion in more traditional places and manners. However, readers familiar with mountain culture will no doubt agree that Bradley has, true to his promise, captured the spirit of the peculiar religious beliefs and practices of the early twentieth century Cumberlands.

Characters

A significant portion of Bradley's verse consists of recollections of persons he encountered or was told about as he traveled in the Cumberlands. Some tell their own stories, others are seen through physical descriptions or accounts of actions related by a narrator. Many are said to have been described to narrators by "folks who remember." Bradley states that his characters are based on "picturesque possibilities" and "artistic, rather than social, significance" (Old Christmas ix). Most are presented as verbal portraits or caricatures rather than as fully developed or changing characters: young mountain maids; courageous mountain widows; revered granny-women; abusive or vulgar mountain men; lively musicians; outsiders who have come to nurse, teach, or collect cultural relics; community heroes; and innocent children. Some of Bradley's characters resemble the stock characters of local color novels by writers such as John Fox, Jr. and Lucy Furman.

Mahaly, a pretty, young flirt who lived on Gayly Creek, represents the wilder version of mountain womanhood. Typical of the girls who gave the creek its name, Mahaly is "as bad as most boys / to have big times, and make a noise."

Typically, she is pretty too,

> With bright red hair, eyes green blue,
> Freckles, a nose turned up and pert.
> And she was the very worstest flirt —
> Kep' six young fellers on a string.

She has settled down some "since her first baby came in May." The narrator confides that "most Gayly gals is caught that way." Sue Dalin, courted by both David and Saul in "Saul of the Mountains," is another

> pretty little thing,
> With lips like laurel in the spring,
> With sparkling eyes, like some deep pool
> Beneath a rock-house, clear and cool,
> An' softly curving cheeks, whose blush
> Flame[s] like a winter hollybush.

The young maid, who comes daily to sing and play her "dulcimore" for the recuperating stranger in "The New Life," though she has just turned sixteen, displays "a woman's grace."

> Her hue [is] warm
> As if it held a shade of gold.
And through her scanty garments fold . . . her
body's firm straight line.

Her shimmering hair, spun silken fine,
Drawn back in a loose knot below
Her slender neck, let blue veins show
About her temples . . .

The delicate white witchery
Of amber-shadowed neck and ear . . .
Long curved lashes brush her cheek
when she . . . lowers her gray eyes.

Her beauty lingers in the thoughts of the convalescent long after she has left his
side each day. When Judith Hall is first spied by Jason Daughn, she is

A slim young thing pressing out the white
Sheep's wool, with whiter, glancing feet,
And with her hands, holding up the neat
Dark linsey skirt, so as to show
The gay red petticoat below.

Strong mountain women are represented by the courageous widows in "Will
Warner" and "The Mountain Mother." Will Warner's mother somberly and silently
prepares a bed for her dying son. To his single cry of pain she exhorts, "Aw, Will,
quit that! If ye've got to die, I Die like a Warner!" When he finally dies, the
mother bears her last son "up the steep hillside, to the gravehouse gate." Only
after she has left "him alone in the arth to sleep" does she "stumble back to the shack" and allow herself to weep. The Mountain Mother singlemindedly devotes her life to instructing her son in the skills he will need to avenge his father's death. She draws heads on trees and writes the enemy clan's name on bits of board for his target practice. She brazenly lies to a posse who might "steal" her family's right to revenge. After her son is killed avenging his father's death, the woman dies contentedly knowing that she has "raised a man."

Elderly women, sometimes called granny-women, are characters in "Pretties" and "The Sanger's Call." The age is visible in their hands. The hands of the elderly woman offering crafts from the porch of her mountain cabins "are wrinkled and knotted / and brown. . . ." The widowed ginseng picker's hands, once strong enough to hoe sang from the hills, now are "old [and] trimble so / They scarcely now can hold the hoe." Those women, too, are portrayed as long-suffering and strong.

Males who dominate or abuse the women in their lives include Prince o' Peace; the husband of the Strange Woman; Saul; the farmer in "Travels;" and Doc Jimpson Stote. Most of the undesirable males are characterized by a narrator's description of their actions. The narrator of Lake Erie, for example, tells readers that Doc "sort o' got . . . the name / o' killing gals," and that the doctor casts spells with "charms and conjuring." The Demon Lover's satanic nature is reinforced by dress and appearance. He wears

\[\ldots\text{ a fancy vest}\]
And his long hair, which now is gray,
All black and slick with bear's grease lies
Down on his neck. He dark eyes — 
And use[s] them, too. He gay ties
O' flaring red, with spots o' green.

The narrator of Saul's tale describes Saul as "hav[ing] the most land, and the best gun" and of being "mean." The storyteller says that Saul "pine[s] to fight ... when he [gets] drunk, " and that he drinks "a sight," keeping sober only "from May or June, down through October" when the crops must be harvested. The Strange Woman claims that her husband "seeks [her] bed only when drunk" and treats her as "his cabin slave." The "pappy" described by the child-narrator in "Mother Goose on Goose Creek," like several men in Bradley's poems, is in the "pen" for killing a man after drinking some "likker."

Not all of Bradley's male characters are mean, abusive, or drunk. More upstanding men are seen in characters such as Jason Daughn and Little Leatherwood. Little Leatherwood, a character based on a Hindman lawyer, embodies the best qualities of progress and a proud heritage. There are "but few as good / 'Round [t]here, as Little Leatherwood." He "owns the store, an' runs the town." He is the best shot in the county, but cares "heaps more / For books, than all in his store" and has "heaps o' them," some big and "bound up in sheep." With his calm demeanor and fair judgment, he has averted both a local bank crisis and the renewal of an old feud. After fire nearly destroys the community, he leads the
rebuilding. Now, folks marvel at his new store of cement and his house of sky blue — with its "bathtub where you turn / Two things to let the water through. . . ."

Several other male characters, though not heroes of Little Leatherwood's stature, earn the reader's respect. Among them are the farmers celebrating their harvest in "Invitations," the father who has gone to get food for his "Poppet," the hospitable if slightly temperamental host and father in "The Ballad Collector," and Jake Sykes, whose restraint saves a soul and a friendship in "A Mountain Faustus."

The more genteel qualities of mountain womanhood are displayed by characters such as the Mountain Angel, Judith Daughn, Lake Erie, and Mally. Lake Erie is one of the "shy and gentle-like" young girls who has "fixed her mind on going to school." Forbidden to become a nurse, she rides "round" to help the sick, who think "a sight" of her. Mally and her mother, left alone after brothers and father are killed in a "fierce feud fight," maintain a spotless cabin and provide for themselves on their small mountain farm.

A few of Bradley's characters are children. The child in "The Child and the Rattler" and the Blind Boy are happy, trusting children at home in an existence close to nature. While the child's trust in one of nature's beautiful creatures leads to disaster, the Blind Boy's trust brings pleasure and security. When he is

... done with filling quills to feed his mother's loom,

And tired o' picking banjo tunes or binding up the broom,

[He] ramble[s] up and down Quicksand for miles and
with no worry of losing his way on the familiar paths. Lulled by the "sight o' pretty sounds" he is able "to forget, almost, that [he] is blind." So complete is the boy's absorption and so pure his joy that the reader can almost feel his heart "leap up when he beholds" his sight of familiar sounds. He is certainly a creation of Bradley's Romantic bent — a true Wordsworthian character. In stark contrast, the impoverished, starving "poppet" in "Lullaby" represents the less pleasant side of childhood in the Cumberlands.

The characters that populate Bradley's verse are not limited to mountain residents. The nurses, teachers, ballad collectors, and others who came to help or to learn from the mountain people play key roles in "The Mountain Angel," "The Strange Woman," "Lake Erie," "The New Life," and "The Ballad Collector." The Mountain Angel is an example of the dedicated nurses who traveled on horseback to care for the sick, "mov[ing] as angel[s] minist'ring." The "fotch'd on women" who came to teach in schools like those Bradley visited at Buckhorn and Hindman are described in "Lake Erie." The stranger in "The New Life" might represent many strangers mentioned in Harper's who came to study some aspect of the land or culture. The Ballad Collector is a rather humorous verbal caricature for whom Bradley, Cecil Sharp, or one of the other collectors in the region at the time might have been the model. His host and narrator says that

He wore a glass stuck in his eye, a little round-like hat,
A coat that had a belt about, and stockings to the knee.
He shore did have the quarest turn I might 'nigh ever see.
He was right tall an' powerful then, an' kindly gitting old.

....

... He had a little pack
All fastened up with straps an' things, he carried on his back. . .

....

He'd come down here to gather up them songs our children sings —

Them silly little ballet-songs. . .

The stranger's dress and demeanor lead the host to "'low" that "he [is] some traveling man," and to exclaim to his neighbors, "He was a quare-turned feller shore!"

While most of Bradley's characters are patterned after individuals he met or local incidents he had heard about during his travels, two might have been lifted from the poems of Coleridge or Keats. One is the "damsell," at first merely a soft voice out of the darkness, who lures young Leatherwood to get down from his horse and don a silken gown, then leads him into "a hall ablaze / With cressets" where dancers. . . [dance in] silken gowns and doeskin shoes." When the source of the voice becomes visible, Leatherwood sees

A damsell whose lips and whose cheeks were red,

Whose eyes were like stars, and whose braided hair

Shone like the corn, when the summer air

Ripples across it bright and fair.
The young maiden at the Doubles of Carr Creek who "rides a dark mule" is dressed "all in white from her head to her foot," while "the cloth of her saddle [is] flowered with red, / And a gay crimson tassel [swings] at her steed's head." But "the brim of her sunbonnet" is "shrouded with shade" — for it "shelter[s] no smiling young face, / But a skull that leer[s] out, with a grinning grimace, / Through sockets uncurtained and bony and bare." Her image, mirrored in the pool, reveals her to be not a beautiful maiden at all but Death. Both "damsells" evoke memories of Coleridge's eerie settings and mysterious maidens in poems such as "Christabel" and "The Eve of St. Agnes."

Sometimes a romantic, sometimes a realist, sometimes a balladeer, Bradley sketches for his readers the variety of mountain residents that cast lasting impressions upon his memory. Only two significant groups are missing: the industrialists who came to cut trees, dig mines, and build railroads and the miners and laborers who worked for them. That omission underscores Bradley's intent to capture the cultural heritage of the Cumberlands. He chooses his characters to that end — to portray vestiges of the region's past that linger in its present.

**Autobiographical Aspects**

With the exception of "The Doubles" and "Young Leatherwood's Dream," probably the "one or two [poems] of a more imaginative turn spoken of in Old Christmas," Bradley claims that the song-ballads of Singing Carr are "compounded
about equally of legendary lore and of matter that came under [his] immediate observation during his travels. He attributes the tales of Old Christmas to recollections of appealing or picturesque incidents and individuals encountered along the way (xii). A comparison of the poems with the nonfiction accounts in the Harper's magazines confirm the autobiographical nature of the verses.

In "Hobnobbing with Hillbillies" Bradley tells of coming upon "two boys riding to hunt, bareback on a single horse . . . one boy [holding] a rifle across the steed's neck [as] the other blew a lusty blast on a curving ram's horn, while the hounds came loping along, singly or in pairs" (94). The scene, he says, might have been "in England in the eighteenth century." In "Song Ballets and Devil's Ditties" he tells of seeing "an old blind fiddler . . . fitfully dispersed by the flaring of a torch whose staff was thrust into the ground so that the flame came only a few feet from his deeply lined face . . . sawing away . . . [as] his voice, cracked and quavering, rose and fell rapidly in a nasal, monotonous sing-song" — causing "all that had seemed familiar, conventional, and commonplace" to fade from the scene and making an observer feel that he was in "Defoe's London, listening to some peddler of broadsides proclaiming his wares" (901). His reactions are mirrored in the reaction of the character in "The New Life" whose response to his entrance into the mountains is that "history [has] turned back her page" and of being "travelers in another age."

Many incidents in the poems are thinly disguised, verified accounts of incidents related in Harper's. In "Hobnobbing with Hillbillies," Bradley gives
accounts of the J. B. Marcum and Ed Callahan assassinations, both part of the Hargis-Marcum feud. His accounts are based on conversations with a friend who visited near the time of the Marcum assassination, ballads he heard during his visit, and a personal experience at Callahan's store, and accounts of the trial of Callahan's killer, which took place while Bradley was in the region. "Men of Harlan" is also based on personal observation described in "Hobnobbing with Hillbillies." Bradley recalls riding with some companions from Kentucky into the foothills of Tennessee and Virginia. The men rode in single-file, a habit made necessary by the narrow creek-bed roads of their home country. Inhabitants of the town through which they passed, recognizing their somber dress and single-file formation, called them "Harlanites." The words of one elderly woman who "allowed [they] didn't favor Men of Harlan" reminded Bradley of the old Welsh song "Men of Harlech" and planted the idea for the poem "Men of Harlan" ("Hobnobbing" 100). Recollections of funerals and revivals described in "Women on Troublesome" was the source of ideas for the "gatherings" in "Gambols on Gayly," "Saul of the Mountains," and "Prince o' Peace."

Numerous descriptions of creeks, hillside cornfields, mountain cabins, settlement schools, mountain music, crafts and food, quilt patterns, holiday celebrations, landscapes, and details of day-to-day life found in the poems also mirror true-life observations included in the magazine accounts. The "likker" that the Hales serve in "The Fiddler" is from Cutshin, where Bradley tells of seeing lines of illicit stills ("Hobnobbing" 95). Although not traceable to specific events,
several episodes in "The Ballad Collector" surely stem from personal experience. The cabin owner tells "the fellers" that he "knowed [the stranger] warn't no mineral man." There are several accounts of Bradley and his party being mistaken for "mineral men" or mapmakers ("Hobnobbing" 99, 102). The host's puzzlement at the stranger's serious attitude toward the "song-ballets" resembles that of an educated mountain woman whom Bradley says was amazed to learn that the "ballets" she had learned as a child were "real literature" ("Song Ballets" 908). The host's pipe-smoking "old woman" may have been suggested by a pipe-smoking woman Bradley met at an eastern Kentucky store ("Hobnobbing" 93). References to spells, superstition, and supernatural happenings in poems such as "Lake Erie," "The British Lady," and "Old Christmas" are based on Bradley's encounters with individuals said to possess charms or know "words of ceremony" and of accounts he heard of residents who "sold their souls . . . in . . . the best Faustian traditions" ("In Shakespeare's America" 441). "The Mountain Faustus" tale is based directly on a tale told to Bradley by a man he met during his travels ("Hobnobbing" 97).

In Singing Carr Bradley speaks of an evening spent with members of the Old Carr Church located on Carr's Fork in Knott County. The setting was "a big cabin set somewhat back from the main creek . . . where [about thirty] family members . . . had assembled to receive [the visitors]." The group sat in a circle "around a sputtering coal fire. In the center . . . 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." As they
waited for the phone to ring, "the inevitable flat bottle [of corn liquor] was produced," and everyone took their "little dram" as it was passed around the circle, including "a young mother who poured out a spoonful... and gave the soothing dose to her fretful infant." When the ring finally came, Bradley discovered the mountain substitute for phonograph music — hymns sung over the telephone (Singing Carr iv). "Singing Carr" is the poetic account of that evening. The title of both the poem and the book is a result of the conversation with Brockaway, who claimed to have labelled Carr Creek "Singing Carr."


... In his dreams
... often visited this land.

And once, while still a boy he'd planned
To get a horse and ride straight through
That strange lost country...

... But there came
No time work did not wholly claim,
Till now — now, when the very thought

Of solitude a solace brought.

... he had come here . . . .

In "Hobnobbing with Hillbillies" Bradley reports the difficulty in obtaining horses because he and his party arrived at corn planting season. The traveler of "The New Life" has gone "from creek to creek, [trying] / To get another," but "nowhere / He'd found a nag" because "stock was rare / In that corn-planting time." Bradley reports that his contact with the mountain people was extended when he contacted "mountain fever" and was forced to extend his stay while recuperating in Hindman.

The traveler who stumbles into the mountain village "half sick with thirst" and half blind with "streaming sweat" also recuperates from "mountain fever" at Carson Town, a barely-disguised Hindman. Upon awakening from his fever-induced sleep, the traveler thinks of "Doris, at home"

Doris . . . at that name

The whole blank past back-flooding came,

He knew once more the searing shame

Of those long years of servitude,

When he had followed every mood

Of a vain woman, every whim,

Though all the while she'd sneered at him

In secret, held him up to scorn.

...
And . . . for years, had lightly played

With his deep love.

The fictional Doris, who claimed to have "made" her husband what he was, had "wanted gold," and so, "to win her love, / He'd put dull drudgery above / All else in life!" and "sold himself for dross [to win] some useless wealth." Bradley's niece confirms that he was, at the time of his visit, distressed by a marriage that had never been compatible and that was at the time casting a shadow over his entire life. Feeling that "his life [is] done," the dejected stranger of the poem craves the oblivion of the isolated Cumberlands. In the words of the traveler, Bradley may well have given vent to feelings resulting from a marriage where one mate's worship of material success clashes with the other's passion for artistic pursuits.

"The New Life," "The Mountain Angel," and "At Parting" provide grounds for speculation about romantic entanglements that may have occurred during Bradley's sojourn. In Part II of "The New Life" the traveler, who in Part I displays so many similarities to Bradley, falls in love with a much younger maiden who comes to sing and play for him as he recuperates from typhoid. In her company he finds peace, "the troubled spirit's sweet release, / That he had come so far to seek." Visiting the farm where the maid lives with her widowed mother, the traveler dreams of how he might "add land to their land, / Build a house, with barns, buy stock . . . raise cover crops for corn . . . that he perhaps was born / To show these mountaineers new ways / To win back wealth . . . . It would be something to redeem a race." That dream concurs with Bradley's zeal for the
preservation of mountain culture. The poem closes with the traveler's conviction that the life that he once thought done "[has] only just begun." Neither Bradley's letters nor his magazine articles mention a romantic liaison with a young girl, but the circumstances of his life and the many similarities to the traveler make speculation unavoidable.

Two additional poems feature farewells between a male "outsider," who might have been Bradley, and a woman who is to remain in the mountains. The woman in "At Parting" bears the child of her lover; yet the poem suggests that she is married to another man. Again, Bradley's correspondence and magazine articles provide no hint of such an affair, but Bradley, like the man in the poem, had to "return to the world of men" and might have anticipated seeking solace in a return visit. The relationship in a third poem is firmly grounded in fact, although the romantic aspect is unconfirmed. Elizabeth Watts, a teacher at the Hindman Settlement School during Bradley's convalescence, has identified the Mountain Angel as Harriet Butler, "the trained nurse at Hindman who nursed Bradley through typhoid fever." According to Mrs. Watts, Butler was "a very beautiful woman" of whom Bradley was very fond. In his farewell, the traveler anticipates a return to Quarrelsome, but he declares that if he "shall . . . not see [the angel's] smiling face / Come to meet [him] at the cabin door . . . " he has no wish to return. Instead he would prefer to "let the little town . . . stay in [his] mind, with [her], a dream." The similar tone of the three poems suggests that the poet may have been involved in a romantic relationship of some sort during his stay. However, the
differences in the women and the circumstances of the relationships leave readers wondering whether the truth lies in one, none, or some combination of the three stories. The dedication of Old Christmas to The Mountain Angel (without use of her real name) and Elizabeth Watts's memory of Bradley's "high regard and affection" suggest Harriet Butler as the most-likely subject of whatever aspects of the love stories may be true.

The Mountain Angel shares the dedication of Old Christmas with Little Leatherwood. The lawyer, like the nurse, is not identified by name, but Elizabeth Watts remembers him, too. He was Hillard Smith, prominent Hindman lawyer who displayed the "new sense of responsibility among professional men" described in "Women on Troublesome." The details of the fire that destroys most of Quarrelsome in "Little Leatherwood" match those of a fire which destroyed most of Hindman in 1913 (Watts Apr. 1986). It is probably also the fire cited by Bradley as the event that destroyed most of his belongings and thus hastened his return to Connecticut.
William Bradley began his literary career during a period of transition in American literature. When he completed his work at Columbia and became a literary advisor for McClure's magazine, Romantic and Victorian traditions were beginning to fade from favor in America as they had done in England a decade earlier. The modernist modes such as imagism and realism were only beginning to take form.

Poetry was in a particularly bleak state. Poems possessing literary merit were scarce and the profits from publication of poetry were scant. Magazines, on the other hand, were growing in popularity, leading many poets seeking publication to Harper's, the Atlantic, Scribner's, Lippincott, and similar magazines (Perkins 68-69). Even in those publications, poems were usually relegated to spaces between fiction and essays.

Poets whose work frequently appeared in the popular weekly or monthly publications were known as "magazine poets." Bradley's numerous contributions to Scribner's, Century, McClure's, and Dial certainly place him among their numbers. However, his literary contributions were not limited to magazine poetry. During the first two decades of his career, leading magazines published his feature articles and essays, usually on topics from art and literature, and major publishing
houses published his books, which included a biography of Bryant and two highly regarded translations of French works.

The tone and content of his early publications leave no doubt about Bradley's loyalty during these years of conflict and flux in American letters. He met the changes that loomed on the literary horizon by turning to the past. His fondness for the medieval, Romantic, and even some Victorian traditions are evident in the verses written during his "escapes" into the remote Cumberlands.

The folksongs and ballads from medieval and Renaissance Britain are the dominant source of rhyme, rhythm, allusion, diction, plot, and character in Bradley's Kentucky verses. Rhyming couplets and refrains attest to the influence of folk music. Phonetically-spelled dialect, themes of ill-fated love, family feuds, supernatural happenings, and untimely death also confirm Bradley's appreciation for ballads and folksongs. The characters who populate Bradley's tales are mountain versions of the balladeer's heroes and villains. Titles of both volumes of verse allude to folk music and folk tales.

However, Bradley's works also indicate appreciation and extensive knowledge of literature that extends through the Victorian Age, and his letters reveal that he corresponded with contemporaries such as imagist Amy Lowell and attended readings of modern poets such as Frost and Masefield. Influence of early eighteenth century works such as Cowper's The Task and Goldsmith's Deserted Village is evident in his emphasis on landscape, his portrayal of an idyllic past.
amid a desolate present, his scenes of rustic cottage firesides, and his recollections of the past by first-person observers (Jackson 91).

Although Bradley depicts the harsh realities of mountain life, he usually does so through the eyes of a Romantic; he sees the primitive beauty of the landscape, feels compassion and respect for the common people, and harbors an affection for their heritage. Also like the Romantics, he enjoys occasional flights of fantasy; dreams, and visions play a significant role in his poetry. From Bradley's imagination, as from that of Keats and Coleridge, come paradoxical and mysterious maidens. The experience of the traveler who stops to water his horse at the Doubles of Carr Creek brings to mind that of the knight in "La Belle Dame Sans Merci." For both, the ecstatic joy evoked by what at first appears to be a beautiful young maiden turns to fearful disillusionment when the vision of beauty proves to mask evil and death. The silk-clad maiden who leads Young Leatherwood to a mystical cabin in the woods might be the mountain version of the "damsel bright, / Drest in a silken robe of white / That shadowing in the moonlight shone" in Keats' "Isabella." The lords and ladies who "dance[d] to sweet music" within the damask-hung walls might have been transported from "The Enchanted Castle" of Keats with its "golden galley all in silken tone" (Jackson 124). Bradley's sojourn in the Kentucky highlands parallels the inspiring four months that Keats spent "tramping in the highlands" of Britain and later versified in Lines Written in the Highlands (Jackson 148). "Old sages" who tell stories to questioning travelers in works such as Mary Robinson's All Alone and
Wordsworth's *Excursion* seem to be literary ancestors of Bradley's narrators (Jackson 161). Bradley's strategy of beginning stories abruptly, leaving readers to infer the identity of speakers and listeners as the poem progresses, is used by Wordsworth in poems such as *The Prelude* (Perkins 118-139). Wordsworth's compassion and treatment of aged or impoverished characters such as the "Old Cumberland Beggar" may have influenced Bradley's treatment of characters such as the old woman in "Pretties" and the mother and child in "Lullaby" (Jackson 36).

The tales of love amid family feuds that intrigued Bradley bear similarity to those that intrigued Sir Walter Scott more than a century earlier (Jackson 115).

Like Coleridge, Bradley had "drunk deep" of the spirit of Old English ballads; the intoxication is evident in his work. The red-spotted bright green snake, that "coils around the wings and neck of a fluttering dove" in "Christabel," becomes a metaphor for Doc Stote's crushing of the title character's spirit in "Lake Erie."

You've seen a sarpint set its coils

Around some fluttering little bird,

Stark mad with terror, and you've heard

The frightened twittering sound it makes

Well, Doctor, he's one o' them snakes,

And Lake, she was a bird like that.

Doc's ties, "o' flaring red, with spots o' green" complete the image.
Bradley's chief legacy from the Victorians is the dramatic monologue made popular by Browning and his contemporaries. In poems such as "My Last Duchess," and "Count Gismond" speakers sometimes "impute" a question or otherwise respond to unheard remarks from the persons they address as do speakers in "Old Christmas," "Lake Erie's Demon Lover," and "Gambols on Gayly." Like Browning, Bradley reveals time, place, and occasion as the poem progresses (Hallock 3). Bradley's narrators, like those of Browning, often speak in "jerks and breaks and side observations" and quote others as they tell their tales (Hallock 1-3).

Bradley's tales bear a still closer resemblance to Kipling's monologues of "the unpoetic." Their language and spirit are similar to that of Kipling's characters in Barrack Room Ballads. Kipling's desire to "catch the language, vocabulary, idiom, and pronunciation of common soldiers" (Perkins 11) is echoed in Bradley's desire to reproduce the idiom of mountain speech. Bradley also brings to his writing the journalistic eye for detail, flashes of humor capable of "evoking a chuckle," diction that barely avoids being exploitive, and a desire to write poetry that appeals to a broad spectrum of readers that were characteristic of Kipling (Perkins 11-12). "Song Ballets and Devil's Ditties" opens with a comparison of eastern Kentucky to Kipling's "East of Suez."

Bradley's poems also show significant influence of pre-Raphaelites such as Morris and Swinburne in their "welding of romantic, classical, medieval" attitudes and "adherence to the simplicity of nature" (Clark 260-63). Perhaps Bradley's
closest literary kinship is to William Morris. Like Bradley, Morris's interest in the arts was multi-faceted. Both Morris and Bradley wrote books about etching. Both are known for translations and contributions to magazines and considered poetry a "subtrade." Both wrote during the years when expanded industrialization was changing all aspects of their respective nations — including literature. Both sought reassurance during those times of rapid change by retreating into the literary past (Faulkner 13-22). George Santayana's description of Morris as a "Romantic with a passionate need of sinking into ... dreams" (Perkins 43) might just as easily describe Bradley. So might Grigson's description of Morris as a man who "rejected the contemporary" in favor of "a more generous and humane ideal" (152-53).

Lionel Jackson's characterization of Morris's work as "a synthesis of romantic nostalgia, Arnoldian melancholy, and pre-Raphaelite color" (Perkins 41-43) is also descriptive of Bradley's work. The depiction of "the co-presence ... of a sense of beauty and a sense of crisis" employed by Morris (Faulkner 13-27) is present in Bradley's portrayal of the beauty of eastern Kentucky's language and landscape and the economic and social crises that threatened the region. The "power of passion in a world in which it [cannot] flourish" ascribed to Morris's "Defence of Guenevere" (Faulkner 10), is present in Bradley's tales of thwarted love. Bradley's weary character in "The New Life" might have acquired his belief that man's work should bring satisfaction rather than drudgery by reading Morris. The questions that open Bradley's poems might have been spoken by narrators such
as the one who begins his tale with “Tell me children, who are these?” (Grigson 63). Both Bradley and Morris frequently implied the passing of time by seasonal changes (Grigson 163). Both wrote in rhymed couplets. The list of similarities is long and varied. Although Kipling, Keats, Coleridge, Defoe and Goldsmith are mentioned in Bradley's magazine articles, Morris is not. However, Morris's similarity to Bradley suggests that their literary or personal paths may have crossed, especially in light of the fact that Bradley's friend Ford Madox Ford was an avid attendee of Morris's lectures (Grigson 153).

The American literary movement in which *Old Christmas* and *Singing Carr* might best be placed is the local color movement, prominent in Kentucky as well as in other regions of the United States during the 1800's. Although the movement had almost died out by the time Bradley came to Kentucky, characteristics of local color writing are abundant in *Old Christmas* and *Singing Carr*. Bradley's purposive portrayal of the people and life of the Kentucky Cumberlands has much in common with the works of Lucy Furman and John Fox, Jr.: phonetic spelling and use of dialect, colorful and eccentric characters, and bits of whimsical humor. Like many works of other local color writers, Bradley's poems are directed largely to readers of the popular magazines of the day and focus on local characters and incidents, rather than on universal truths (Ward 49-50).

From 1913 to 1916, Bradley authored three books on seventeenth century etching and a collection of poems titled *Garlands and Wayfarings* and edited several books about art. He also continued to contribute poems and articles to

Bradley's two books of local color poetry were published in 1917 and 1918 as the movements that influenced them faded. Within a few years the modernist mode prevailed. Within a few more years, the author whose affection and sympathies had remained with the literary past turned his interests and loyalties to the literary future. Soon after returning to Connecticut from his final visit to Kentucky, Bradley's personal and professional life were radically altered. Divorce freed him from an unhappy marriage, and a military assignment took him to France. By the time World War I ended, Bradley had become a liaison between American authors living in Paris and publishing companies in the United States. Shortly afterward, he married a French native who shared his literary background and interests.

During the 1920s and early 30s Bradley produced highly regarded translations of French writers Wanda Landowska, Marie Lenerie, Louis Hemon, Remy de Gourmond, and Paul Valery. From the early 1920's until his death in 1945, Bradley and his second wife Jenny S. Bradley, a respected translator and literary agent in her own right, represented an array of American authors in Paris. They introduced American readers to French writers such as Sartre, Camus,
and Simone de Beauvoir, and French readers to the works of American writers such as Sinclair Lewis, John O'Hara, and Theodore Dreiser. They found a publisher for Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* and negotiated the American publication of Gertrude Stein's *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (Steegmuller 6). Bradley's accomplishments led Karen Rood to call him the most successful American agent in Paris during the important literary era of the twenties and thirties (57), and Janet Flanner, whose "Letter from Paris" was a regular feature of the *New Yorker* during those years, to label him "the leading agent and prophet . . . on transatlantic affairs" (Rood 56). The Bradley who had spent two decades of his career worshipping the literary past devoted the last decades to championing the avant-garde writers that had replaced his earlier idols.

**Critical Comments**

Neither *Old Christmas and Other Kentucky Tales in Verse* nor *Singing Carr and Other Song Ballads of the Cumberlands* received much attention from literary critics, but both were extensively and favorably reviewed by contemporary newspaper and reviewers. Reviews of *Singing Carr* and *Old Christmas* report Bradley's genuine compassion, respect, and understanding for the mountain people. Although they do not find the verses to be great poetry, they do praise William Bradley as a storyteller and a purveyor of the spirit and culture of the southern mountaineer.
A number of accolades from the *Old Christmas* reviews follow the verses in *Singing Carr*. The *Springfield Union*, for example, calls Bradley "a regional poet of power" who has woven the mountain-folk of the "dark and bloody ground" into "dramatic and often beautiful" tales. Other excerpts contain praise for the poet's humor, pathos, and narrative power. One reviewer compares Bradley's portrayal of the Cumberlands to Masters's portrayal of the Spoon River region, Neihardt's portrayal of the American Northwest, and Frost's poetic portrayal of New England. A *New York Times* reviewer calls *Old Christmas* a "treasure to the literary explorer" ("Local Color"). Another finds *Old Christmas" an unusually interesting book" that "sustains throughout the note of archaic survival struck by the title" and praises its "simple, nature-inspired morality" ("Unique American Verse").

A few poems are singled out for individual praise. The *New York Times* compares the folk aspects of *Old Christmas* to the Russian ethnographic novel ("Unique American Verse"). The *Review of Reviews* cites "Men of Harlan" as one of the finest lyrics in American folk poetry and praises Bradley for catching "the rhythms of the rugged peaks and the music in the hearts of solitary men." The *New York Evening Post* finds in "Will Warner" the tragic power of the medieval ballad, calling it "a new ballad of the Spartan mother at the death-bed of her last son, sacrificed to a mountain feud" ("Cumberland Ballets").

*Singing Carr* and *Other Song Ballads* received mixed reviews. The *Boston Evening Transcript* calls *Singing Carr* one of the most popular books of the year,
one of the "raciest and most picturesque" descriptions of the Cumberlands in contemporary verse. Other reviews praise Bradley's authentic and sympathetic observations of mountain culture. However, one New York Times reviewer reproaches Bradley for portraying a life too "simple, primitive and passionate" to be believed and for having his characters speak in cliches after citing the poetic quality of mountain speech. The same reviewer goes on to concede that the phrases that had become cliches to the rest of the country might still have been poetry in the archaic language of the mountains. He praises Bradley's compassion for the mountain woman and notes that in Bradley's verses, "behind picturesque colors of an earlier civilization looms the drab sorrow of women — not 'pretty sentimental sorrow, but stern, heavy, 'and hopelessly endured with fierce stoicism.'"

Another reviewer sees Bradley's poems as "interesting less for their poetic quality than for the light they shed on the . . . spirit of the mountain people" ("Cumberland Ballads"). Shedding light on that spirit was Bradley's expressed primary intent. Reviews indicate that he succeeded.

Responses from the literary community, however, are sparse. Fellow magazine poet Bliss Carmen named Old Christmas as "one of the most striking contributions to American poetry in a long time." William Stanley Braithwaite, who included Bradley's works in several of his yearly anthologies, praised Bradley for the "versatility of his poetic gifts," for his "love of beauty and art for its own sake," and for his idyllic sensibility to nature." However, Amy Lowell's letters to Bradley cast doubt on Braithwaite's credibility among his peers. The most
extensive evaluation of Bradley's poetry by a contemporary writer and critic is that of Conrad Aiken in *Scepticisms*. Aiken includes Bradley with Winfred Wilson Gibson and T. S. Eliot in a chapter entitled "Varieties of Realism." Aiken explains the inclusion of both Bradley and Gibson in a chapter on realism by stating that both poets evolved from romanticism to realism. He defends his classification of the two as realists by noting that the poets' short, rhymed narratives deal with the commonplace, the bitter, and the trivial in the lives of working people. He acknowledges that romantic qualities linger in the poems of both writers: their love of color, the force and beauty with which each tells a story, and their occasional lapses into "pedestrian sentimentality" (199-201). Specific qualities noted in Bradley's poetry are the quaintness of idiom, the simplicity and economy of style, and the ability to create a desired effect (202). Aiken labels Bradley's technique as "useful rather than brilliant," claiming that his poetry seldom rises above the level of the storyteller. However, Aiken considers Bradley a master storyteller and concludes that in Bradley's work "the story is the thing and the story does the trick" (204). Aiken adds a special note of praise for the "genuine imaginative power" that shines through "The Strange Woman" and its sequel "The Boy Speaks" (205). He sees Bradley as a cogener of Gibson, a realist who does not ignore the harsh conditions of mountain life and the sometimes primitive beliefs and rash behaviors of mountain people. He also believes that, like Gibson, Bradley sees rash behaviors and harsh conditions in the context of a noble past, an awe-inspiring environment, and a visionary imagination. The implication seems to
be that Bradley and Gibson are realistic romantics — or perhaps romantic realists — artists who see and portray reality through the eyes of a romantic achieving an effect similar to a photograph in which the photographer softens features by diffused light. Aiken presents Eliot as a representative of the new variety of realists, who, in contrast to Gibson and Bradley, began as realists rather than as romantics.

Despite the generally high regard of his contemporaries, William Bradley's Kentucky poetry is rarely found in print today. The inclusion of the poem "Old Christmas" in a 1950s high school anthology was evidently the last printing of Bradley's work in a nationally circulated publication — perhaps in any publication since the early 1900s. Being a Kentuckian neither by birth nor year-long residency — Bradley fails to qualify for inclusion in anthologies of works by Kentucky writers or in literary histories of Kentucky. Like most local color writings, Old Christmas and Singing Carr were acclaimed nationally during the era when Appalachia was a fashionable topic; but, like their counterparts, they lack the universality to gain literary stature or retain widespread attention. Bradley's adherence to the language, rhyme, and tone of earlier poetic eras, which had contributed to his appeal in the early 1900s, later contributed to his literary obscurity. Bradley's poetry was written during what Conrad Aiken describes as an era of "uncertainty, confusion, and conflict" in the world of poetry (62-64).

"When the confusion cleared, ... the conflict settled, [and] rhythm and rhyme [had given] way to blank verse and freer rhythm" (Aiken 62). The "amalgam of
romantic plots and realistic descriptions of things immediately observable" that had been the material of the local color movement were replaced by the harsher realities of naturalism" (McMichael 6).

Bradley's explanation for William Cullen Bryant's loss of popularity later proved an apt description for the declining appeal of his own poems. In his biography of Bryant, Bradley claims that Bryant's poems were obscured by "an eclipse, due to the rise of new schools" and that esteem for the poet faded because "[his] school was not that of contemporary ... poetry..." (Qtd. in New York Times 200). James Still, who lives and writes on the same Troublesome Creek featured in Bradley's poetry, explains the demise of Bradley's poetry in much the same way. Still says that Bradley's poems were written "in the fashion of his day," but that the rhymed verse of that fashion was soon "out of sync" with the modern modes.

Although Bradley's legacy as a local color poet may be merely a fleeting glimpse into a culture and literature that no longer exists, the author established a firm and lasting place in literary history as William Cullen Bryant's biographer and as shaper of the international heritage of the 1920s and 30s. According to New York Times reviews, William Bradley's idiomatically correct translations of French writers were highly regarded for their excellent literary quality (Rood 57). Publisher's Weekly hailed Bradley as "a pioneer in the international field of translation of French books into English and the sale of American works in Europe" (393). In 1927, the French government recognized his promotion of
French literature abroad by making him a Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor (Rood 56). When Bradley died in Paris on January 11, 1939, the New York Times remembered him as "a widely known interpreter of French art and literature" as well as author, critic, and representative for many prominent writers (19).

Bradley’s biography of William Cullen Bryant has maintained critical respect through five printings, the last in the late 1970s. It is for his highly regarded translations and contributions to international literature and as Bryant’s biographer that William Aspenwall Bradley will most likely be remembered.

Conclusions

William Aspenwall Bradley was a man of eclectic interests and talents. He was a scholar, a dreamer, and an entrepreneur. During the first two decades of his career he wrote a definitive biography, three respected books on seventeenth-century etchers and etching, and three volumes of local color poetry. He edited correspondence of seventeenth-century literary figures, books on art, an American novel, and a collection of garden poems. He was an accepted member of the east coast literary community. He was a popular poet as well as a feature writer for most of the era's popular magazines and an editor of several of them. He appears to have been motivated both by a drive to succeed and a need to escape from the world of material success.

He relished the months spent in the remote mountains of Eastern Kentucky. He corresponded with well-known writers and editors, but he truly admired the
rustic hospitality and straightforward honesty of Kentucky mountaineers. Perhaps it was because of the dissatisfactions in his personal life that he found the simplicity of mountain life a source of personal peace and an inspiration for his writing. Perhaps the dreamer and the escapist in him were the muses that directed his attention to the rural worlds of Goldsmith and Wordsworth and the imaginative worlds of Keats and Coleridge. At any rate, for the first half of his literary career Bradley immersed himself in the diverse roles of scholarly biographer, art historian, and magazine poet and editor.

World War I marked the turning point in his literary career as it did in the nation's history. In 1918, Bradley entered the army and ended his unhappy marriage. After a few months in Washington writing for the Sanitary Corps, he was sent to France. There he began the second half of his life. After completing his military duties, he married a French native of kindred interests and spirit. But that spirit and those interests were quite different from Bradley's pre-war sentiments. The man who had so fondly embraced the past now turned enthusiastically toward the future. With his wife, he developed one of the most important literary agencies in expatriate Paris. Together they knew and represented most of the American writers in Paris; they were instrumental in getting avant-garde works published in the United States and in establishing the American Library in Paris. Fluent in both French and English, they also translated the work of the noted French writers of the time and played an important role in bringing the English translations to American readers.
The William Aspenwall Bradley who came to Kentucky to write poetry in dying modes and to lament encroaching industrialism and a disappearing oral tradition bears little resemblance to William Aspenwall Bradley, international literary agent and champion of writers such as Gertrude Stein, Henry Miller, and Anaïs Nin. It is the latter Bradley that is most favored by literary history, but it is the earlier Bradley who holds appeal for readers whose curiosity is piqued by literary enigmas. While the earlier work admittedly fails to match the standards of the writers who inspired it — notably Coleridge, Wordsworth, Keats, Morris, Kipling, Goldsmith, Johnson, and Fox — the poetry nevertheless retains sufficient historical, romantic, and escapist appeal to capture the imagination of readers who share a penchant for journeys into the romantic and colorful past of a remote region.
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Appendix 1

A Partial List of the Works of
William Aspenwall Bradley

Books

Author


*Singing Carr and Other Song Ballets of the Kentucky Cumberlands*. New York: Knopf, 1918.
Editor


Translator


**Articles**


"Gustave Dore'." *Bookmark*. May 1911: 359-68.


Poems


"Mountain Angel." Literary Digest. 17 Nov. 1917: 37.
Appendix 2

Poems from *Old Christmas and Other*  
*Kentucky Tales in Verse*  
and  
*Singing Carr and Other Song*  

*Ballads of the Kentucky Cumberlands*
Poems from *Old Christmas*

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Prince o' Peace ............................................. 161
Saul of the Mountains ................................... 170
The Strange Woman ....................................... 175
Will Warner .................................................. 178
Young Leatherwood's Dream ............................. 180
At Parting

She said: "Dear love, ah, well I know
I cannot keep thee, thou must go
Back from me to the world of men.
Nor are we like to meet again.
And yet, because even so, 't was sweet
To chain one day thy wandering feet,
Henceforth, wherever I may be,
I shall prepare a room for thee,
And it shall be thy parsonage."
She smiled, looked down, and turned a page
In the big book that by her lay
Once more: "Do you recall the day,
Months back — you had just come," she said,
"When you and I together read
The story of the Shunammite,
Who, seeing Elisha day and night,
and who, as love within her woke,
With craft to her blind husband spoke:
'Let us a chamber make, I pray,
For this good man who goes his way,
Which is God's way, in sight of all.
Come, let us build it on the wall,
And let us place therein a bed,
That he may stay to rest his head,
When tired; a table for his bread;
A candlestick to give him light;
A little stool, He may requite
Some day our kindness. Who can tell?'
Ah, she did love her prophet well,
As I've love you, and since our child —"
She paused once more, looked down, and smiled —
"Will never know his father's fame,
I'll call him by Elisha's name."
The Boy Speaks

"Well, anyway, M'liss, now she's dead. You take her feet, I'll take her head, And fling her up there on that bed, Till morning. This one here will do, I reckon, to-night, for me and you. Let's have some grub. You'll find enough O' cold corn pone and other stuff Out in the cookhouse. Well, I'm rid — Step light there, or you'll wake the kid!

"They'll penitentiary me for this, Or try to. But you saw her, M'liss — You'll tell 'em how you saw her stand There in the dog-run, gun in hand — I wonder where she got that gun. I never thought the bitch was one To take a turn like that. I'd run Her pretty hard. But she was mild — Had n't more spirit nor a child.

"Yet she was bound to have her way. She aimed to git me from that day I caught and kissed her in the school. A woman sure kin make a fool Of any man, even when she's old. Seemed like she had a strangle hold On me, and would n't let me go. I did n't want to, first, I know. Her voice was kindly sweet and low,

"And she could make a feller feel All sort o' soft from head to heel, When she just touched him with her hand. I reckon you can't understand. For she warn't much like you and Nan. And yet I'd rather have you than Her any day. 'T was just a man She wanted — reckoned I would do To make her have a kid or two.
"Well, there 's the kid. Before it came
She talked so much o' sin and shame,
I married her to make her quit.
I told her, though, I 'd hold the bit
In my own teeth. She had a fit
Most every time I took a drink.
Them furin women seem to think
A man cain't never take his dram.
Well, she 's gone now, at last, God damn

"Her soul! She 's got me in a fix.
I wisht I 'd never knowed her tricks.
But that 's enough o' her to-night.
I 'd rather hug you, M'lis, a sight.
Come on to bed. Put out the light.
I reckon they 'll put me in the pen.
But they 'll soon get me out, and then
I 'll take you, git a school to teach —
Unless I have a call to preach."
Ed Callahan

"If you've heard of Bloody Breathitt, and of the Hargis clan,
That ruled it over Jackson town, you've heard of Callahan —
Ed Callahan, high sheriff, who was Judge Hargis's man.

"And you have heard how Callahan near by here kept a store
At Crocketsville, where his foes came, and shot him through the door,
Then swiftly slipped away and left him writhing on the floor.

"But, stranger, have you ever heard how Big Ed, as he lay
In a clean cot at Buckhorn school, dying an inch each day,
Spoke a brave word, that far was heard, and ended the long fray?

"They bore him down to Buckhorn school, and laid him there between
Fresh sheets in a bright sunny room, whose walls were white and clean —
The prettiest place in all his life, I reckon Ed had seen.

"And while he lay and tossed and groaned, with an armed guard outside,
His clansmen gathered in the hills, from Breathitt, far and wide,
Waiting a word to start the fight, from Ed, before he died.

"They waited days, they waited weeks, and still no message came
From Callahan, whose word was law, to fan the smouldering flame.
The clansmen talked in twos and threes, and whispered low his name.

"What had become of Callahan, the leader that they knew,
The friend of Hargis, White, and Jett, and all the bloody crew,
That had made of Breathitt's name a shame, the whole wide country through?

"What had become of Callahan? So while their watch they kept
About the fire, some waking, asked, while others lightly slept.
Then to the gathering-place, one dawn, a boy from Buckhorn crept.

"The word had come from Callahan! Swiftly the news went round.
The clansmen woke and seized their guns, beside them on the ground.
But all were silent. In that crowd there was not heard one sound.

"Then the boy spoke. He told them how, last night, before he died,
Ed Callahan had called his friends to come to his bedside,
And how, as he gasped and fought for breath, with his last breath he'd cried:
"Tell 'em to quit it!' That was all. The clansmen slunk away. Each in his home was back again by noon or night next day. Hero of peace, Ed Callahan lies in his grave, I say."
When Faithorne heard that his friend was dead,
He made no sound, no word he said,
But he clenched his fists, till the blood ran red.

Then he flung the saddle across his mare,
Rode down the creek to the village where
The Ernes and the Elys had their lair.

He saw, when he came to the village street,
A child that played in the dust and heat,
And he swung her up behind his seat.

"They can send me to hell, but they 'll send her too!"
He dropped his rein, both his guns he drew,
And he held them cocked, as he rode straight through

The straggling street, in the locusts' shade,
Where the court-day crowd a passage made,
And the women fled to their homes, afraid.

They fled to their homes and they drew inside
The children who clung to their skirts and cried,
To see Madge Erne with Fult Faithorne ride.

He rode till he came to the fork road turn,
But he saw no Ely and saw no Erne.
Then his right side felt a steel ball burn.

He wheeled and he saw them, heard Frank Erne cry:
"My God! don't shoot, or the child will die!"
Saw him knock Cal Ely's muzzle high.

They broke and ran, but it was too late.
Fult shot down two at the Elys' gate.
Then he rode back home. He had cleaned the slate.
Gambols on Gayly

"How do I reckon our creek came,
In the old days, to git hit 's name?
Well, gals was always rude and gayly
Round here — still is. Now there 's Mahaly,
Shade's girl, as bad as most our boys
To have big times, and make a noise.
She kept things on the stir last year,
Though she 's some settled now, I hear,
Since her first baby came in May.
All gayly gals is caught that way
Sooner or later. Pretty, too,
With bright red hair, and eyes green blue,
Freckles, a nose turned up and pert.
And she was the very worstest flirt —
Kep' six young fellers on the string,
Not counting Hiram Pickering.
For Hi was kindly getting old;
But he kept store, had heaps o' gold,
Folks said, and when his third wife went,
He ordered a marble monument
From one o' them mail-order books.
You 've seen the darned thing, how hit looks
Up yon — an ángel in a sheet,
With wings, but no shoes on hits feet,
Trying hit's best to fly away.
Hi had a Decoration Day
When hit was placed there, for his wife,
And though he 'd hated her in life,
He took on bad to howl and cry . . .
So gals was glad to talk with Hi.
But first it seemed he did n't care
To talk with them. He 'd had his share,
He said, and shook his head, and when
Folks asked if he 'd hitch up again,
He said: 'No, sir,' that he was through.
But us who 'd knowed Hi long, we knew
Such feelings was n't going to last.
And sure enough, one month warn't passed
Before we used to see him daily
Ride down the creek to talk with Haly,
Dressed in store clothes, and, like as not,
He'd have a fancy flowerpot
Picked fresh that morning. For Hi's first
Had favored flowers. He had cursed
Her then. But now they came in handy,
And he was mighty glad that Mandy
Had been a plaugy daggone fool
And learned strange tricks at Carson
School,
Over at forks o' Quarrelsome.

"Now, when Mahaly saw him come,
And knew at last he meant to talk,
She made them other fellers walk.
They was all powerful mad, but one —
Jerome, the widow Martin's son —
Took hit right hard. He got his gun
And swore he 'd make old Hiram pay
For Haly sending him away.
He followed Hiram everywhere.
But Hi, to show he didn't care,
And wasn't a mite afraid o' Rome,
Rode round and left his gun at home.
But once, when he came riding back,
And had most reached the storehouse shack,
He saw Rome standing on a clift
Above the creek, and saw him lift
His gun, squint down, take careful aim.
Then came a little spurt o' flame.
Ping! And the steel ball barely missed
Hi's heart to graze his lefthand wrist.
Hi wheeled his horse, clapped spurs, and then,
Over his shoulder: 'Shoot again!'
He shouted, and three times before
He 'd crossed the creek, and reached his door,
' Shoot! shoot again! ' he turned and cried,
Then slipped from his saddle, ran inside,
Grabbed up his gun, and soon the creek
Heard Hi's old .30-.30 speak,
And Rome lit out then, mighty hot,
For Hi was reckoned a first-rate shot.

"There was n't much trouble after that,
'Cept what Hi had at home with Hat.
But there he had enough o' strife.
Hat, she was sister to Hi's wife,
Sallury. When Sallury went,
Hi studied awhile, and then he sent
For Hat to come keep house for him.
She was past forty, gaunt and grim,
But she had been good-looking once
— Still was — and folks thought Hi a dunce
Not to go marry Hat instead
O' some young flighty emptyhead.
For Hat could cook, and she could spin.
She kept Hi's house neat as a pin,
Tended the store, and held a hoe.
Now Hat knew she would have to go
If Hi brought Haly home, and so
When talk began, she took on bad.
You see, 't was all the home she had,
And she 'd made up her mind to stay
Married or single . . . any way . . .
She did not say much, but her looks
Was black as ink in printed books.
And every time she served a meal
O' vittles, she made Hiram feel
She 'd crush Mahaly 'neath her heel,
If she could only git a chance . . .
But when Hi planned to give a dance
For Haly, trouble began to brew.
Hat sat up every night till two,
And drank. For Hat, she loved her dram.
Then she 'd be late, and Hi would damn
Her soul next morning from his room,
Or he 'd jump up and fetch a broom
And try to poke her out o' bed.
She plagued him, but he went ahead
To have the dance that he 'd norated
At the last meeting. Hiram hated
To dance himself, but he would show
He was not yet too old and slow
To foot hit on the cabin floor.
And so he sent for Billy More,
The one-armed fiddler, who could play
Most without rest, all night and day,
Holding the bow between his knees,
And scraping, as easy as you please,
The strings across hit, and could sing,
Or blow on a mouth-organ thing,
Both at one time.

"When the night came,
Hi saddled up his black mare, Mame,
Rode down the creek to Shade's old shack
To git Mahaly, brought her back
Seated behind him on the mare.
You would have laughed to see the pair —
Hiram so stiff in his boiled shirt,
Haly's bare feet beneath her skirt
O' turkey-red, a-dangling down,
A hat, with feathers from the town,
That sort o' slanted 'cross one eye.
With both her arms she held to Hi,
And on his shoulder leaned her head.
Then, when he 'd lifted her, and led
Black Mame back to the horses' shed,
He brought her in. The dance began.
I reckon they warn't no prouder man
In all the world, than Hi that night.
Mahaly's little feet was light,
And she could cut the short dog fine
In 'Boxing the Gnats' and 'Hook and Line.'
Most every fancy step she knew,
And did it, pulling Hiram through,
Till he was puffing at her side.
Yet poor old Hiram would have died
Before he stopped and gave a chance
To some one else to take a dance
With Haly, who danced and never stopped,
'Cept with the music; then she flopped
Across the bed, like all the rest,
With Hiram, who wished she was undressed
Alone there with him in that bed,
After the infare guests had fled,
And his two waiters had tucked them in...

"Then once again began the din
O' feet and fiddle. Haly leapt
Up from Hi's arms, and pranced and stepped
As brisk and lively as before,
While dandy one-armed Billy More
Scrapped out, with fiddle across his bow:
'Step light, ladies, on the ball-room flo',
"
Don't mind your legs, if your garters don't show,'
Then turned to 'Turkey in the Straw.'
I reckon, stranger, you never saw
A bigger dance than was that night.
The prancing couples was a sight,
For all the folks, from far and nigh,
Had come to take a night with Hi,
Who placed beside the door a gourd,
And kept it filled with licker drewed
That morning, from Dan Collins' still,
And each one helped hisself until
They was a bedlam, sure enough.
They warn't but one shied off the stuff,
And that was Widow Martin's son.

"Now folks had never seen Rome shun
Licker before, and wondered why.
They was some meanness in his eye —
That much was plain. All night he stood
Like a dumb figure made o' wood,
In a dark corner, and his glare
Followed Mahaly everywhere.
Not once from her and Hi hit strayed,
And once his hand reached up and played
With something hidden on his breast —
Us folks knowed what, and kindly guessed
They might be trouble yet before
The dance was through. Then, from the door
That opened on the gallery,
We heard a yell. Who should we see,
But Hat, a pistol in each fist!

"Now, all night we had kindly missed
Old Hat, who loved right smart to dance,
And with the liveliest gals could prance,
And wondered why she 'd stayed away.
Well, there she was, as clear as day.
'T was clear that she 'd been drinking, too.
Her eyes was red, her lips was blue,
Round her flushed face, her grizzled hair
Stuck out all straggling everywhere.
Her skirts was kilted to her knees,
And her wild looks most seemed to freeze
The folks, who stood stock-still, and stared
At Hat. Hit looked like no one dared
To move. . . . She gave another yell,
Began to shoot. Folks ran like hell
Then, you can bet, right through the door.
Haly left Hi there on the floor
Yelling like mad for Hat to quit.
Before he knew what, he was hit
In the left leg. He lurched and fell,
Just as he heard another yell,
From Haly, on the creek outside.
He tried to reach her, but he tried
In vain. He knew that he was done.
He could n't even reach his gun.
When Haly yelled, and yelled again,
He started up, but groaned with pain.
Then Haly's wild cries fainter grew.
Hi felt himself grow fainter too,
And that was the very last he knew
That night.

"What had become 'o Haly?
Well now, the rocks, you see, is shaly
On these here creeks. She tripped and sprawled.
That was the reason why she bawled
The firstest time. But, stranger, soon
Her bawling took another tune,
When suddenly an arm went round
Her waist, and swung her from the ground,
Then flung her 'cross a horse's back
Like she had been a 'tater sack,
Or some such thing. She screamed and cried,
And beat against the horse's hide
With both her little hands and feet.
But 't warn't no use. Rome gained his seat —
For hit was Rome, as p'haps you guessed —
Well, maybe then you know the rest —
How Rome, he carried her away —
And kep' her, too. I hear folks say
They's living happily to-day
Up yonder there on Quarrelsome.
And if a preacher-man should come,
Some day, to hold a preaching there,
Jerome and Haly both declare
They'll have the biggest wedding ever
Been seen on forks o' Kaintuck River!"
Lake Erie's Demon Lover

"Who was that feller we saw pass
A-traveling on a little ass,
With a tall hat and long-tail coat,
And a chin-whisker like a goat?
Why, that was old Doc Jimpson Stote,
Though mostly we call him Doctor Jim.
I reckoned every one knowed him.
For he 's been doctoring folks round here,
I judge, right nigh on thirty year.
He studied down to Louisville.
But, stranger, if I was took ill,
I 'd a darned sight rather trust my life
To Mis' Lake Erie — that's his wife,
Or was, until she up and quit.
Folks never blamed her here a bit.
For Jim, he is the lowest skunk,
Even for a doctor. Most is drunk —
A lazy, good-for-nothing lot.
But Jim is worse than any sot,
Though he 's that too. Gals is his game —
Married or single — all 's the same
To Doctor Jim. He has a way.
He casts a spell on them, some say,
With charms and conjuring and sich,
And I suspicion he 's a witch,
More than a doctor. You hain't seen
His bee-gums painted red and green,
With stripes o' yellow, black, and blue —
All sorts o' fancy figgers, too,
Like in a witch-book once I had.
Folks here is mostly mighty bad
To hold to witches, high and low.
And Doctor Jim, he knows that 's so.
They 's heaps o' folks is half afraid
O' Jim, and that 's the game he 's played
When he 's set out to git a maid,
Who like as not has hated him.
But hate hain't never hindered Jim.
He seems to like them all the more
When they show spirit first, before
He kindly gits them in his toils.
You've seen a sarpint set his coils
Around some little fluttering bird,
Stark mad with terror, and you've heard
The frightened, twittering sound it makes.
Well, Doctor, he's one o' them snakes,
And Lake, she was a bird like that.
I knewed her when she was a brat
In shifts that scarcely reached her knees.
And she was pretty as you please,
Back in them days, and different, too,
From most the other gals that grew
Up hereabouts, and knewed no shame.
Folks said most like it was her name —
Lake Erie. No, I don't know why
Cal called her that. But she was shy
And gentle-like, and warn't no fool.
She'd fixed her mind on going to school —
Not one o' them common, no-'count kind,
With no-'count teachers, you can find
On every creek, but that new sort
The fotcht-on women had just brought
To Carson, forks o' Quarrelsome.
Lake, she had seen the women come
Over, one summer, to our creek,
Had talked with them, had heard them speak
O' ways o' living, strange and new.
So she begged them to take her, too.
And them strange women, they liked Lake,
And they was mighty glad to take
Her back with them. She stayed two years
And got a heap o' new ideas
'Bout what is right and what is not —
Things us folks here had most forgot —
And 'bout the way to sew and cook,
And read things printed in a book.
She got a heap o' notions, too,
'Bout what a wishful gal can do
'Sides staying at home and getting wed
To the first boy that turns her head,
Then spending all her life right here,
Bearing a baby every year,
Until she feeds and rears a score,
And never stirring from her door
To go as far as Perkins' mill,
Them quiet gals oft has a will,
And Lake, she said she 'd be a nurse.
Then Cal, he started in to curse
His daughter for a god-damned fool.
He went and yanked her out o' school
Spite all the women-folks could say.
They tried to spirit her away
To Lexington. But, when Cal saw
Their trick, he said he 'd have the law
On them, and so they let her go.
You see, Cal thought 't was something low
To nurse. For nurses has the name
O' leading lives o' sin and shame
'Mong us folks here, and Cal, he swore,
Pine-blank, he 'd never have a whore
Among his gals. And yet he gave
Each o' the rest to be a slave
To some dull, drunken, shiftless lout,
Who 'd mostly beat his wife about.
One opened Sue's, Lake's sister's, head
Once, with an axe — left her half dead,
A-lying on the cabin floor,
Then went off with his paramour,
When Sue had tried to keep him home.
Mostly the others used to roam,
Leaving their women to chop and hoe,
While they from town to town would go,
And drink, and fight, and stay in jail.
No wonder Lake felt her heart fail
With such a look o' life ahead.
She swore that she would never wed.
But 'bout that time the Doctor came.
Them days he did n't look the same
As he looks now; but he was dressed
In them same clothes, and fancy vest,
And his long hair, which now is gray,
All black and slick with bear's grease lay
Down on his neck. He had dark eyes —
And used them, too. He wore gay ties
O' flaring red, with spots o' green.
Poor Lake thought she had never seen
A man as grand as him before —
Good, too. He talked about the pore,
How he had come up here to tend
The sick, and kindly be their friend;
And when she said she 'd wish to nurse,
He told her straight she might do worse
Than stay right here, and help with him.
So often she rode round with Jim,
And sick folks, they all thought a sight
O' Lake. Her hand was sort o' light
Like feathers, old Aunt Hepsy said.
Then she could tidy up a bed,
And turn a pillow fresh and cool.
She made a feller feel a fool,
Sometimes, with all the things she 'd fix —
Flower-pots, and such-like fancy tricks.
And yet he liked it, and he 'd wonder
What would n't a feller give, by thunder,
To have a gal like Lake, for life.
Some tried to git her for a wife,
After a nasty fever spell.
But mostly it wasn 't hard to tell
That she was dead in love with Jim.
You 'd see her dark eyes follow him —
For hers was dark, like his eyes, too —
About, whatever he would do
There by a body's bed. The blood
Colored her face, like a dark flood,
If he as much as looked at her.
And you could see her bosom stir,
If he against her chanced to press,
Or touched her hand, or brushed her dress.
And Jim, we saw he saw it, too.
We watched him close, for us folks knew
Some things 'bout Jim she did n't know.
Tales in the hills is kindly slow
At first, in gitting started round.
But 'peared they was a gal got drowned
Where Jim had doctored on Cutshin,
And it was said he 'd helped her in.
Might have been talk, but just the same
It sort o' got for Doc the name
O' killing gals, when all was over.
Soon he was called the 'Demon Lover,'
Like in that ballet women sing —
A ballet all about a king,
Who, in far countries, had a daughter.
Her lover pushed her in the water.
And so, you see, there was some sense
In folkse's talk. And then Sal Spense
Came in and told us how she 'd found
A young dead baby on the ground
Up in the woods, near the old slide.
Now one o' Garvin's gals had died
Up there, in some mysterious way,
The week before, and none could say
What was the matter. Doctor might,
But Doctor kept his mouth shut tight.
You see, he knowed Mont Garvin well —
Had lived up there with him a spell.
They 'd had a quarrel, then, I hear.
Doc stayed away for most a year,
But went back up to tend the gal.
I recollect once meeting Cal —
Lake's paw — who said, as he went by
Mont's shack, he kindly cast an eye
About, and saw Doc loafing there
With Mont. They 'd made it up, for fair,
For both was drinking from one tin,
While that pore gal lay dead, within.
"That tale did Doc no good, you bet.
Folks said the kid was his, and yet
'T was hard to prove. Mont would n't speak.
So things stayed quiet on the creek,
And Doc rode round here, like before,
With Lake, who seemed to love him more
Than ever. If a body said
A thing against him, she 'd take his head
Clean off. For she had plenty spunk.
But once Doc came to see her, drunk . . .
He talked . . . I reckon he told her all . . .
Then, when he saw her start to fall,
He caught her, flung her 'cross a bed . . .
From that day, Lake's dark eyes looked dead.
She feared Doc, and she tried to hate
Him too, but reckon 't was too late. . . .
Something was broken in her, sure,
Or how could a gal like Lake endure
To touch or wed a man like Jim?
For, like you know, she married him,
And went up yon with him to live —
If you can call it life to give
Yourself to a low skunk like that.
Why did he marry her? The rat
Wanted a mouse to keep his hole.
He thought he had her, body and soul.
But that's where Doc made his mistake.
He couldn't git the soul o' Lake,
Though he had bound her body fast.
I knewed her dullness couldn't last
When, thinking that Lake had turned a fool,
He tried to use her for his tool
To lead on other gals to sin.
Then something seemed to wake within
Lake's breast, like what we'd known before.
She had three kids — looked for one more —
When she told Doc she was going to go.
He would n't believe her first, and so
He only laughed and rode away.
But when he came again, next day,
He found that she had kept her word.
She 'd left two kids, but taken the third —
She knew that soon they 'd each have two —
And Doctor saw that she 'd been through
His drugs and pills, and taken half.
This time he did n't hardly laugh,
But swore that he would bring her back.
He heard that she had taken a shack
Down near the mouth o' Rocky Cleft,
That furin folks had built and left
For years. There she had brought her store ...
He found her standing in the door
With his best gun ... He 'd missed that,
too.
It seemed he did n't like the view,
And so he kindly slunk away.
He hain't been back there since that day,
And when he meets her on the creek,
He rides right by, and does n't speak.
For Doc, he is a dirty sneak,
But he has sense to understand
When some one has the upper hand.
Lake has it now, and holds on tight.
She doctors — waits on folks a sight.
She never studied none, that's true,
But she 'd soon learned all Doctor knew,
Which wasn't much, perhaps, but, still,
He 'd studied down to Louisville.
And brags about the time he cut
A man, took out a piece o' gut.
But if I wanted to keep my life,
I wouldn't let Doc use no knife
On me; and, if I was took sick,
I'd send for Lake all-fired quick,
And let old Doc Jim ride his mule
To them his coat and hat can fool,
And his sly way o' looking wise,
With them big goggles on his eyes.
They 's some that fears his witch-like ways
Though not so many now these days.
And Doctor, he is getting old.
They say, when he was young, he sold
His soul to Satan. Well, that's right.
I hope the Sarpint gits him tight
Some day. Gee-oh! There 'll be a yell,
When he plumps down straight into hell!
"No, sir, they ain't but few as good
Round here, as Little Leatherwood.
That 's jest our name for lawyer Brown,
Who owns the store, an' runs the town.
He put the county trouble down
Years back. The Trenches killed his paw,
An' he tried hard to git the law
On them. But when they all came clear,
He stood his ground, an' would n't hear
O' starting up the war again.
His folks was mad as hornets then,
Called him a coward, sneered, an' cursed.
I reckon the women was the worst.
They always is, when they 's a fight.
But Leatherwood, he had the right.
What these here mountains need is peace.
But how 's the shooting going to cease
If no one 's ready to begin?
Leatherwood brought round his kin
After a while, an' now the clan
Worships him almost, to a man.
I might say to a woman, too.
You 'd ought to see his ole Aunt Sue
Act the young gal when he comes nigh,
Smooth out her dress an' cock her eye.
An' other folks ain't far behind.
I reckon, stranger, you won't find,
In the whole county, one 's his foe.
You see, we trust him, an' we know
He means jest what he says, pine-blank.
'T was he that started up the bank,
An' once, when Dawson Blaine got mad,
An' said he 'd take out all he had —
He was right rich an' had a lot —
To bust things up an' make 'em hot,
Leatherwood drew, then locked the door —
'T was at a meeting, — an' he swore
That Dawson should n't touch a cent.
An' then the time that Big Bill Blent,
Who 'd quit the army, started in
To shoot the town up, raised ole sin,
Leatherwood sent for him, said: 'Son,
I sort o' hate to spoil your fun,
But things is different here to-day,
Right smart, from when you went away.
We 're powerful glad to have you back,
But if I hear another crack
From that there gun o' yours, you 'll see
You 'll have to fight it out wi' me.'
Then Bill, he knowed he 'd have to quit.
For Leatherwood could toss an' hit
A silver coin up in the air,
Or kindly part a feller's hair,
Jest like his uncle Leatherwood.
I never rightly understood
How was the way both them two came
To git that queer outlandish name;
For common leatherwood, you see,
Is jest a sort o' hickory
That 's limber like from butt to tip.
Folks use it here to make a whip,
Or else a flail. The stuff won't break,
Bend it or bruise it. But, landsake,
Them two would break before they bent.
They say Big Leatherwood once went,
When he was sheriff, for a man.
First thing he knowed, the whole blamed clan
Was buzzing round him on his track.
'T was night, an' 't was so powerful black,
He could n't hardly see a thing.
But he could hear the rifles ring,
An' every now an' then they came
A little spurting flash o' flame,
So he could give 'em shot for shot.
Say, boy, it must have been right hot
For Leatherwood, who stood his ground,
An', as the balls came whistling round,
He kindly smiled an' whistled too,
An' sang the only song he knew:

'Oh, they hain't a bit o' use in whining,
Or asking the reason why.
Tomorrer the sun may be a-shining,
Though cloudy be the sky.'
"'T warn't long before he 'd brought down one,
Then all the others broke an' run.
Next day he got his feller flat.
Now Little Leatherwood's like that,
An', stranger, 't ain't so very long,
Since we heard him sing that same song.

'T was when the town burned down last year.
Happened he was away from here
That night, good twenty miles, on Clare.
He 'd ridden over on his mare,
'The Brown Gal,' jest the day before,
To make a trade at Bartram's store,
Or might have been a different tale.
We saved the courthouse an' the jail,
But all the rest was swept away.
How the thing started, none can't say.
'T was late, an' folks was all abed.
The town was still, like it was dead,
When sudden came a fearful yell.
I jumped, looked out. Judge Mott's hotel
Was all one crackling sheet o' flame.
Soon Leavitt's stable was the same.
The hardest hearted 'would have cried
To hear them critters caught inside.

We bust one door, let out a few,
Then looked to see what we could do
To stop the blaze a-spreading fast.
We got the buckets out an' passed
Them from the creek to those that stood
On roofs around, but 't warn't no good.
Us folks missed Little Leatherwood
That night. His store was next to go,
'T was in the stylish new brick row
He 'd built that spring, all bright an' red.
He 'd fixed an office overhead,
With desks an' rugs an' heaps o' books.
I 'll bet you could n't beat the looks
O' that there office anywhere.

We saved a table an' a chair
An' some big books bound up in sheep.
They made a sorry-looking heap
Down in the street, all bent an' torn.
It sort o' made me feel forlorn
To see 'em, cause he cared heaps more
For books, than all was in his store.
It tickled him to have a lot.

"By now the fire had grown so hot
You could n't hardly stand the heat.
Sudden it jumped across the street
An' nearly cornered Uncle Bill,
Working like sin to save his 'grill' —
Sort of ice-cream saloon, you know.
Seemed like the wind came on to blow
Right smart, 'bout then. The blamed thing
leapt
Beyond an' empty space an' swept
From house to house, along the line.
It took 'em all. Yes, one was mine.
I lost nigh everything I had.
But other folks was jest as bad,
An' Leatherwood was worst of all —
The highest has most way to fall.
He 'd built the bestest house in town,
All colored red an' blue an' brown,
With tin below to look like stone.
It stood up on the creek alone,
But sparks kept falling all around.
Soon it was smouldering on the ground,
An' Dally an' her kids, half dressed,
Roamed through the street with all the rest,
Or stood about the courthouse square.
I said we stopped the fire right there.
Tell you, though, boy, it was a fight.
The women slept in jail that night,
Where most had never slept before,
Or lay along the courtroom floor,
With all their children. But us men
Was glad to have the boardwalk when,
Plumb tuckered out, we 'd done our best.
We had n't much chance, though, to rest.
'T was close on morning, an' right soon
The dawn came up to dim the moon
An' stars that kept a-shining down
All night upon the burning town,
As if they did n't care a hang. . . .
I thought o' times I 'd gone for sang,
An' stayed out on the hills all night. . . .
Seemed like I'd dreamed. But then the sight
Of all that smoking, smouldering stuff
Showed that the fire was true enough.
All what was left was charred an' black.
They warn't but one small measly shack
Left standing here on Carson street.
A feller lived in it named Pete.
Now I 'd missed Pete the night before,
An' when I seed him in the door
That morning, he looked kindly queer.
It 't warn't his moustache on his ear —
'T was jest two feet from tip to tip,
An' when it hung down from his lip,
Folks knowed that Pete had had his drink —
'T was more his face that made me think
To look again. When I came nigher
He called out: 'Howdy! Been a fire,
I see. I reckon I must have slept
Straight through it all.' Well, I most leapt
Out o' my skin. To think that skunk
Had laid there sleeping in his bunk
An' never heard a blessed thing!
At first I had a mind to wring
His daggone neck, the low-down shirk,
Who 'd let us fellers do the work,
While he slept peaceful all the night.
But then it gave me such a fright
To think the feller might have burned,
I could n't say a word, but turned
Away. Folks now was most awake,
An' walking round. 'T would make you ache
To see them searching so to find
Some things the flames had left behind.
They wandered down along the creek,
Mostly was silent, could n't speak.
Growed men was not ashamed to cry.
I seed Judge Mott, who wiped his eye
Where once his old hotel had stood.
I thought some more o' Leatherwood, —
Reckoned by now he must have heard.
We 'd sent a boy last night with word
Over to Bartram's store, on Clare.
'T warn't more 'n twenty miles from there,  
But roads was bad, an' going slow.  
When he 'd git back, we did n't know.  
I kicked his law books where they lay,  
An' almost wished he 'd stay away.  
I did n't want to see his face.  
You see, he 'd almost made this place,  
An' planned to make it bigger still,  
Like Lexington or Louisville.  
Now all his work had gone for naught.  
He 'd take it powerful hard, I thought.  
An' yet we needed him a sight.  
Some fellers started in to fight.  
They 'd smuggled licker in somehow.  
That helped right smart to stir the row.  
Soon things was going straight to hell.  
But then we heard a powerful yell.  
' There 's Little Leatherwood,' folks cried.  
An', sure enough, we seed him ride  
Over the hill an' down the street.  
' The Brown Gal 's' little twinkling feet  
Scarced hit the ground, she came so fast.  
Then, when he 'd reached the crowd at last,  
He drewed up short, an' glanced around,  
Cried: 'Howdy, boys!' jumped to the ground,  
An' while folks made a sort o' ring,  
Gol darn it, he began to sing:  

'O, they hain't a bit o' use in whining,  
Or asking the reason why.  
Tomorrer the sun may be a-shining,  
Though cloudy be the sky.'  

"Well, son, you should have seed the change  
That there song made! It sure was strange.  
'T was like a storm had cleared away.  
Been no more fighting from that day  
In Carson. Folks worked might an' main  
To build them back the town again,  
An' ten times better than before.  
That 's Leatherwood's new cement store.  
I reckon hit won't never burn.  
He 's got a bathtub where you turn
Two things to let the water through,
An' everything like that that 's new,
Up at his house. Hit 's colored blue.
For Leatherwood, he 'lowed he 'd seen
Enough o' houses painted green
Like trees, or brown, like earth. He 'd try
To make his look jest like the sky!
Men of Harlan

Some folks said you fellers was Harlanites when you come riding into the settlement. But I allowed you didn't favor men o' Harlan.

Here in the level country, where the creeks run straight and wide, Six men upon their pacing nags may travel side by side. But the mountain men of Harlan, you may tell them all the while, When they pass through our village, for they ride in single file. And the children, when they see them, stop their play and stand and cry: "Here come the men of Harlan, men of Harlan, riding by."

O the mountain men of Harlan, when they come down to the plain, With dangling stirrup, jangling spur, and loosely hanging rein, They do not ride, like our folks here, in twos and threes abreast, With merry laughter, talk and song, and lightly spoken jest. But silently and solemnly, in long and straggling line, As you may see them in the hills, beyond Big Black and Pine.

For, in that far, strange country, where the men of Harlan dwell, There are no roads at all, like ours, as we've heard travelers tell. But only narrow trails that wind along each shallow creek, Where the silence hangs so heavy, you can hear the leathers squeak. And there no two can ride abreast, but each alone must go, Picking his way as best he may, with careful steps and slow,

Down many a shelving ledge of shale, skirting the trembling sands, Through many a pool and many a pass, where the mountain laurel stands So thick and close to left and right, with holly bushes, too, The clinging branches meet midway to bar the passage through, — O'er many a steep and stony ridge, o'er many a high divide. And so it is the Harlan men thus one by one do ride.

Yet it is strange to see them pass in line through our wide street, When they come down to sell their sang, and buy their stores of meat, These silent men, in sombre black all clad from foot to head, Though they have left their lonely hills and the narrow creek's rough bed. And 't is no wonder children stop their play and stand and cry: "Here come the men of Harlan, men of Harlan riding by."


The Mountain Angel

When I go back to Carson town,
Shall I not see your striped gown,
Your snowy kerchief, and your crown

Of chestnut hair, just tinged with gray,
Or were it not more true to say,
With Time's dull silver dust poudré?

So strange, in that dark valley there,
I should have found in you an air
Of "belle marquise," highborn "bergère."

At Trianon you might have been
The play companion of the queen
Who bared unto the guillotine

Her neck no whit more soft and white
Than yours the stolen necklace might
Have ringed no less with lustral light.

Your only jewels pearls of praise
From simple lips, your diamonds days
Of noble doing, helpful ways.

For you, within those hills' dark ring,
Summer and winter, fall and spring,
Did move, an angel minist'ring.

"The mountain angel" — such the name
Men called you by, when first you came,
Who more their savage pride could tame

Than all the others; for you brought
No wounding word, no alien thought,
But with such deep clairvoyance wrought,

Of that strange, wayward, mountain heart,
Your miracles of healing art,
Resentment, fear, could find no start.
When I go back to Quarrelsome,
Leaving the city's stir and hum,
Shall I not see you smiling come

To meet me at the cabin door,
With children round you, as before?
And shall I see you never more.

In evening light at break of day,
Set forth upon your sturdy bay,
To tend your sick along the way?

You, at the forks, shall I not see?
Then let the little town for me
Remain a haunt of memory.

Let the steep street, the singing stream,
The cavalcade, the rumbling team,
Stay in my mind, with you, a dream.
A Mountain Faustus

"Stranger, they say they 's books that tell
How some chap sold his soul to hell.
You 've read them? What was the feller's name?
Faust? Then I reckon 't warn't the same
As him that lived round here. I 'm sartin
That feller called hisself Bill Martin —
Lived in a log-house on Lot's Creek,
And I 've heard heaps of old folks speak
O' him — tell how, when young, he sold
His soul to Satan — not for gold —
Leastwise, he never got a cent.
Or, if he did, he must have spent
It years ago, for he was pore.
Folks kindly feared to pass his door,
When it was dark, and he set there,
Outside, in his white oak split chair.
He had a heap o' fancy tricks
That warn't in nature. He could fix,
In some strange way, a feller's gun.
It seemed he only had to run
His finger down the bar'l, like this,
To make the best sharp-shooter miss
The target. He could double back
The best hound dogs upon their track.
And when Jake Sykes, who lived near here,
Went up the mountain, once, for deer,
Bill told him, flat, he 'd have no luck.
'T warn't long before he saw a buck
Right in the midst of a whole herd.
Jake fired. The darned thing never stirred.
He took a second shot — a third.
It warn't no use. Each time he missed,
The critter only kindly hissed,
And when he 'd fired his lastest shot,
He saw it toss its head, and trot,
With all the herd, back up the trace.
Yet next day, in that very place,
When he 'd done all that Bill had bid —
Had taken nine nails from the lid
Of Jap Bayne's coffin, found the sign
Of the big buck, and placed the nine
Nails all along there, in a row —
He had n't hardly time to go
Behind a chestnut oak, before
He heard a mighty crash and roar,
And straight from the wood beyond they came
That daggone brute, with eyes aflame,
Like he was going to trample Jake
Who had n't ary chance to take
No aim, just raised his gun and fired.
The buck plunged on, and then expired
Plumb at his feet. Jake cut its throat,
Strung it, and started in to tote
The carcass down the mountain-side.
He skinned it, and he kept the hide.
I saw it once among his pelts.
For weeks he lived on steaks and melts.
He 'd never tasted grub more sweet,
He said, than that there devil-meat.

"And so, I reckon, they hain't much doubt
Bill sold his soul. And yet he mought
Have told the tale to serve his ends.
You see, Bill and Jake Sykes was friends
Before the war, on Abner's Creek.
But Bill, he always was a sneak,
And when, one winter, both the pair
Began to talk with Allafair,
And Bill soon saw she favored Jake,
Then he tried powerful hard to make
Some plan to git the gal away.
He studied on it night and day.
For Allafair, she was a prize —
Could cook the bestest 'tater pies,
Had smiling lips and laughing eyes,
Cheeks like two apples, round and red,
And ways that turned a feller's head,
And made his heart git up and prance,
If she as much as gave a glance
His way. So Bill, he searched his mind —
He had more wits than looks — to find
Some sneaking way to turn her heart.
He made up things, and tried to start
Some tale, so Allafair would think
Jake 'd kissed another gal, in drink.
'T was hard, though, to throw off on him.
For Jake Sykes never was a limb,
Kept sober, though he ran a still.
So folks looked kindly wise, when Bill
Went round a-sowing Devil-seed.
And Allafair, she gave no heed
To things, but passed them on to Jake,
Who had a powerful mind to take
Bill out, some day, and tan his hide....

"Now, Jake took up the Rebel side
When came the tidings o' the war
To these here hills. One day his paw,
While walking home from 'Possum Trot,
Met with some Home Guards. Like as not
They 'd been a-drinking, for they shot
The old man, left him there to crawl
Back to Dan Smith's. He got the ball
Out of his foot, and lay in pain
For weeks. Before he walked again,
Some other bloody Home Guards came.
They made the old man tell his name,
And then they asked where he 'd been hit.
One slouched across to look at it.
'Daggone, that hain't no way to shoot,'
He said, then stooped, and, from his boot,
Pulled out his gun. 'Ole man,' he said,
'Next time, you say 't was in the head,'
And shot him there, as he lay flat.
Now when Jake Sykes got word o' that,
He buckled on his gun, and swore
He 'd more than even up that score.
And so he did. Scarce a day passed
Without some bluecoat breathed his last,
For weeks. But then the country grew
Too hot to hold him, and he flew
Into the hills a while, to hide.
Allafair saw him nights. Bill spied
Upon the two. Then, one dark night,
He saw Jake reach and take the light
From Allafair, and lead her back,
Down the steep trace, to her paw's shack.
Bill figgered out Jake meant to stay
Inside all night, and git away
Before the dawn. He had him trapped!
He leaped on his bay mare, and clapped
His big wheel spur against her flank.
They nearly rolled down off the bank
Above the creek, by Cornett's store.
Bill jumped, and pounded at the door,
Woke all the fellers. Every one
Came out to meet him with his gun.
And so they went from place to place,
Till soon they had enough to face
An army, let alone one man. . .
Then back up Abner's Creek they ran,
Spread out, and made a circle round
The log-house, on the open ground,
And two went up and called to Jake
To come. He came, and no mistake,
Unbarred the door and flung it wide.
One second, and he was outside,
And most before the fellers knew,
He 'd given a leap, and gone clean through
The ring, a pistol in each fist.
They fired, but was too slow, and missed.
Up through the brush they heard him go,
Then turned and scattered home below,
A sorry, disappointed lot. . .
Now Bill thought Jake would make it hot
For him, if he came back some day.
When the war stopped, he stayed away
Right smart. It must have been a year
'Fore he dared show his face round here.
But Jake, he 'd married Allafair.
He was right happy, did n't care
To fight no more. He 'd had his fill.
So when, one day, he met with Bill,
He just looked straight, and passed him by.
Then seemed like Bill would always try,
From that day forth, to meet with Jake,
Who 'd go his way, and would n't take
No notice of him any more,
Than if they 'd never met before.
Because he did n't want to fight,
He did n't have to be polite!
But Bill, he could n't understand,
Seemed like, was always there on hand,
Till Jake, at last, got pretty sick,
And wished the feller would n't stick
So close, and studied how he 'd tell
Old Bill to git and go to hell,
Without its hurting him too bad... ...

"And then, one day, when Jake and Thad
Thought they would like a little fun,
And started out with dog and gun,
To cross the gap, they heard a noise.
Bill broke from the brush, said: 'Howdy, boys,
Reckon I 'll go hunt along wi' you.'
That made them both feel powerful blue.
They did n't speak to Bill, or smile.
And so they went for most a mile,
Letting old Bill keep on ahead.
But pretty soon he stopped, and said:
' That a fair 'possum dog you got?'
Jake flared up like at that, got hot.
They warn'! no better dog to go
At coon or 'possum — told him so.
' Well, boys, bet I can make him miss.'
Bill gave a cur'ous little hiss
That brought the hound right to his side.
He passed his hand along its hide,
Then grinned at Jake, and said: 'You 'll see
How he 'll bark up an empty tree.'
Jake swore 't was all a pack o' lies.
But when they 'd reached a little rise,
Sudden the hound picked up the scent.
' Yip! Yip!' and off he cut hellbent,
Leaving the fellers far behind.
Looked like that hound had lost his mind,
The way he tore along the ground,
Making the most God-awful sound.
At last they found him dancing round,
Like mad, a little leafy beech.
They warn't no 'possum there in reach,
So Jake, he started, with his axe,
To chop it down. Took twenty whacks
To fell it, for 't was full o' sap.
That hound dog made straight for the lap,
Then stood stock-still, in 'bout a minute.
Darned if they were a critter in it!
He whined, but not a feller spoke,
Till Bill, he said: 'Too bad my joke
Made you folks miss your 'possum meat.
But a good fat coon is just as sweet,
And I 'll plumb' take my oath and swear
We 'll find a big one over there,
Yon side the gap, along a log!
Again he hissed, and called the dog.
And when once more he 'd passed his hand,
That hound, he seemed to understand,
Lit out like lightning, led the way.
'T warn't long before they heard him bay
Like, sure enough, he 'd found a coon.
'T was gitting dark now, but the moon
Came surging up above the gap,
And all the time that hound's yap! yap!
Kept growing louder and more near.
Yon side, the fields was mostly clear,
But one big tree lay on the ground,
And there they saw that daggone hound
Leaping almost clean out his hide.
Back up against the trunk they spied
The biggest coon you ever saw.
It got that hound with tooth and claw,
When it closed in. It was a sight,
Jake said, to see them critters fight.
It took them nearly half the night
To make them loosen up their hold.
When it lay dead, Bill said: 'I told
You boys the truth, ain't that so, Jake?'
Jake 'lowed it was, and no mistake,
And Thad, he 'lowed he 'd like to know
The trick. Then Bill spoke kindly slow:
'Well, boys, I like you mighty well —
Want to be friends — so I will tell
You all I know. Them 's but a few
O' the strange things that you can do
If you will follow after me.'
He drew them both behind a tree,
And made his voice low-like and soft.
Jake said just then he looked aloft,
And saw the moon that seemed to reel
Behind wild clouds, and he could feel
Cold shivers through him, as Bill told
How all they had to do was mould
A silver bullet, take a gun,
Go up the gap, before the sun,
Then, to the limb o' some dead tree,
Tie a red rag, and when they 'd see
The sun-ball shining through, take aim,
Cursing Jehovah's holy name,
And calling the Devil ——'

"Stop,' cried Jake,
Who felt his innards sort o' quake,
'Stop there, you skunk, we 've heard enough
O' your blaspheming, heathen stuff.
Begone, now, or, by God, I 'll send
You straight to hell, to meet your friend,
Before he has a fire prepared
To warm your hide!' Bet Bill was scared,
All right. Leastwise, we never heard
He tried again to say that word
He did n't speak. So, till to-day,
They 's no one rightly knows the way
To sell his soul, if he 'd a mind.
And as for Bill, they say he jined
The Regulars, before the end.
And so he cheated his only friend,
When he died logging on the creek,
And got to heaven by a sneak!"
The New Life

I

The soft coal splutters in the grate,
The shadows lengthen. It grows late,
And from the low bed where he lies,
His wandering, incurious eyes
Can scarcely see the oaken loom
That fills one end of the big room
From whose dim rafters vaguely hang
Bunches of onions, roots of sang,
Strings of dried shuckies, ears of corn,
Sunbonnets, clothes, a powder-horn —
A medley of strange mountain things.
From a rude peg a lanthorn swings,
While, on the fireboard, fastened high,
An old hog-rifle meets his eye,
Above a home-made dulcimore.
A sound comes to him through the door
Half-opened on the village street —
A sound of clumsy, shuffling feet,
Loud, boyish shouts. There! Shots again —
More shots — the bullets fall like rain
Upon the sloping cabin roof.
It's odd, his nerves seem never proof
Against their sharp, swift, patterning noise.
And yet, for weeks, he's heard these boys
Go "battering" daily down the creek.
Not so odd, though, for he is weak
From the long fever. That is gone,
Thank God, at last; but wan and worn
He lies there, like a ship in port,
That wind and waves have made their sport,
Till scarcely a shred of canvas clings
To her dismantled hamperings,
And her stout sides are shaken, scarred ... 
Something within him struggles hard
To shape itself. But his dull mind
That gropes and gropes, can never find
The thing it seeks, and soon gives o'er
The effort. Yet dream pictures pour
Beneath his lids when, half asleep,
And tired of counting countless sheep,
He lets his errant fancy rove.
How long, before he reached this cove,
He wandered, still he cannot tell.
Yet some things he remembers well —
That time he stumbled half the night
Up the blind branch, without a light
Till, rousing a cabin with his din,
He made them wake and let him in.
And then that time he crossed Big Black,
Toting a heavy horse's pack,
Because he found no horse or mule
In all that country. What a fool
He 'd been so long to cling and cling
To blankets and that rubber thing
He 'd never used! Next time he 'd bring
A rucksack, stout shoes for his feet.
How they had hurt! And then the heat
Of those walled creeks! No breath of air,
The warm branch water everywhere.
Water! 'T was that, no doubt, had made
Him sick. How he had prayed and prayed
When first he knew that he must lie
For weeks in bed, that he might die
Here, half untended, all alone,
Where even his name would be unknown,
And have his grave on the hillside!
Why was it, though, he 'd wished to hide
In death, no less than life? The screen
Still seemed to cut across the scene
Of his dim past, and something made
Him half reluctant, half afraid
To find what spectre lurked behind
That curtained corner of his mind.

The mountain people had proved kind
Beyond all hoping. They had said
Few words, but tended him in bed,
With clumsy service, touching thought.
One woman butter-milk had brought
Each day, though she had but one cow.
'T was all the doctor would allow
For food, long as the fever lasted.
No wonder he was thin and wasted,
That he could feel each rib and shin.
He raised his hand to touch his chin,
And found a beard he did not know.
He 'd hardly though that it could grow
So long in just six weeks. If she,
Doris, at home, could only see —
Doris! Then swiftly, at that name,
The whole blank past back flooding came.
He knew once more the searing shame
Of those long years of servitude,
When he had followed every mood
Of a vain woman, every whim,
Though all the while she 'd sneered at him
In secret, held him up to scorn.
To keep him, jesting, she had sworn,
And so, for years, had lightly played
With his deep love. But she had "made
Him" — "made!" because to win her love,
He 'd put dull drudgery above
All else in life! She wanted gold.
Well, she should have it, and he 'd sold
Himself for dross. And when he 'd won
Some useless wealth, his life was done.
Then he had craved oblivion —
To lose himself in some far wild.
He 'd heard, when he was but a child,
How, in the South, a grim wall stands,
'Twixt east and west, the Cumberlands,
Built up of ridges, fold on fold,
And how their steep escarpments hold
Deep winding valleys lost between
Sheer sombre hillsides clad with green
Oak forests, or with waving corn.
For, in those valleys, men were born,
Lived, loved, and died, and never saw
The world beyond. They knew no law
Save their wild will, and he had read
Of fierce feud fights, of hot blood shed
Like water, on each fork and creek.
And once he 'd heard a traveler speak
Of rough log cabins, the abodes
Of those rude clansmen, and their roads
That were the beds of shallow streams
Over shale ledges. In his dreams
He 'd often visited this land.
And once, while still a boy he 'd planned
To get a horse and ride straight through
That strange lost country, till he knew
Each nook and corner. But there came
No time work did not wholly claim,
Till now — now, when the very thought
Of solitude a solace brought.
So he had come here.

It was June,
When the full creeks still sang in tune,
That summer heat too soon would dry,
And each green ridge, against the sky,
Melted away in tender mist
Of azure and of amethyst.
Never would he forget the sight
Of spur on spur, bathed in soft light,
That afternoon, ere he descended
From the first gap, and saw all blended
In a translucent atmosphere.
And then the silence! Surely here
He must find peace. And yet, he knew,
As he dropped down, and lost the view,
That, just as the hills closed in behind,
So the dark bosom of his mind
Soon would engulf him as before.
And when he 'd reached the flat creek floor,
And saw the towering creek walls rise
Above him, shutting out the skies,
While the rough trail wound on ahead,
He knew all hope of peace had fled,
And he must henceforth spend his days
Lost in a labyrinthine maze
Of tortuous thought and vain regret.
Yet something had thrilled him, when he met
His first lone horseman on the creek.
They had drawn rein and stopped to speak,
Two travelers in another age.
History had turned back her page,
As if all times to her were one.
Then he had come, at set of sun,
To his first cabin, where it stood
In a rough clearing, ringed with wood —
A magic circle on the ground.
And he had heard the cheerful sound
Of chopping — the summons to "alight."
He had got down and spent the night
With a whole horde, in one big bed.
So, day by day, the time had sped,
And night by night, but all in vain.
No wandering had eased his pain.
Then, at the last, his horse had died,
And he, from creek to creek, had tried
To get another. Stock was rare
In that corn-planting time. Nowhere
He 'd found a nag that he could buy,
And soon he 'd even ceased to try.
For, though he 'd found it hard, at first,
To struggle on, half sick with thirst,
And with the streaming sweat half blind,
The heavy strain had dulled his mind,
But weakened, no doubt, his body too,
Letting the "mountain fever" through.
So, crossing the Pine by Baldy's Crown,
He 'd come, at last, to this poor "town,"
The hillfolk called the village where
Cabins clung round a courthouse square,
With a brick "storehouse" and a jail.
Here he had felt his last strength fail.
The world around had slipped away.
And never yet, until to-day,
He 'd got it back firm in his hands.
But now again the iron bands
Of his past life regained their hold
Upon his heart. The room grew cold.
A woman came and stirred the fire.
Then, as the spluttering flames leapt higher,
The welcome warmth through his limbs crept.
Once more the world slipped, and he slept.

II
Slowly the gray dawn drove the gloom
Out of the corners of the room,
Where every corner held a bed.
He lay and watched each pillowsed head
Turn to the world awakening eyes.
Then, one by one, saw gaunt forms rise,
Through the dim shadows slip away.
Soon from the covers, where he lay,
He heard the house awake once more.
One came, unbarred the heavy door
On the dog-run, and flung it wide.
There was a stir of life outside,
As men and women came and went,
Each on some morning labor bent,
To start the fire, to feed the stock.
The ax fell dully on the block.
How often he had heard each sound!
How well he knew the daily round
Of life here, where the fates had cast
His lot! It seemed that years had passed
Not weeks, since he 'd first lain and heard
That bowl of corn meal being stirred,
That thud of butter in the churn . . .
Slowly his thoughts began to turn
Back to the past that would not die.
So, through long days, he yet must lie,
And think, and brood, and ache, and then
Must he seek out the world again,
Take up some burden? What? For whom?
A ray of sunlight reached the room,
And, through the window, he could see
The golden gourd-hung gallery.
It seemed to him that, at the view,
Something within him stirred anew.
It was not hope. His life was done.
But just to sit there in the sun
Might bring him peace. For it was less
Pain he now knew, than weariness,
From lying these long weeks in bed.
He tried to turn and raise his head
To see still more — perhaps the creek.
But he was still too worn and weak,
Sank back exhausted, with a sigh.

But now, as day by day passed by,
Slowly he felt his strength return,
And more and more he came to yearn
For the warm sunlight there outside.
Restless he listened for the stride
Of the rough doctor, who had brought,
Jesting, one day, for him a quart
Of mountain "moonshine," for a "sup."
And then, at last, they let him up,
Helped him to dress, and placed a chair
Beside the open window where
He could look out. He never knew
That creek and sky could be so blue,
That mountain-sides could be so green.
Yet it was fall now, and between
The pines, the oaks were turning fast.
The woods would now be filled with mast,
And once again he longed to ride
Along the ridge, or by the side
Of some broad, shallow, brawling creek,
But knew he still would be too weak
For many a day to ride or walk.
He was content to sit and talk
With friendly folk who shyly bore
Gifts from their slender mountain store —
Canned fruit, cushaw, and "sarvice" berry,
Crab apple tinctured with wild cherry;
He tasted, liked the bitter tang.
Boys brought their banjos, picked and sang.
The town's best fiddler came and played.
And then, one day, a little maid
Came too, and sang a ballad tune
She said she 'd heard her mother croon
Beside her bed, when she was small.
Already she was growing tall,
Though she had only turned sixteen.
He thought that he had never seen
Such grace in any woman's form,
As in this child's. Her hue was warm,
As if it held a shade of gold.
And through her scanty garment's fold,
He saw her body's firm, straight line.
Her shimmering hair, spun silken fine,
Drawn back in a loose knot below
Her slender neck, let blue veins show
About her temples. He could see
The delicate white witchery
Of amber-shadowed neck and ear,
It seemed to him that he could hear
Beneath her skin, the swift blood speak.
The long curved lashes brushed her cheek,
When she would lower her gray eyes.
He watched the fair young bosom rise
And fall, as her soft breath came and went
She sang, as if she were intent
Only on that old song, could see
Scenes stirred by the magic melody
Fair Margaret lying stark and dead,
Her ghost that sought Sweet William's bed,
Then both the twain undone by love,
And roses and briars that sprang above
Their graves, until they met and twined.
Ceasing, she went, but held his mind
Long from his brooding thoughts. He smiled
To think how, at his age, a child
Could hold his fancy. Half a fear
Sprang in him, as the hour drew near
When she had said she'd come again
Next day, and ñing for him. But then,
Once more to see her sitting there,
Straight in the stiff white oak split chair,
Drove every lingering thought away . . .
So she returned to him each day,
And sang or charmed him with her talk,
And when, at last, he tried to walk,
She walked with him, and helped to guide
His steps. He felt her at his side,
And felt her fingers on his arm.
Again he knew that vague alarm,
But this time put it bruesquely by.
She was a child, and he would try,
While they passed slowly up the creek,
To draw her out, to make her speak
Of her life here, in this lost place.
He listened and he watched her face,
While she ran on. Her "paw" was dead —
Killed in a fierce feud fight, she said —
Both brothers from the hills had gone.
She and her "maw" were left alone
To keep and run the little farm.
They had not come to any harm,
And she was proud that she could go,
With any man, along the row.
She showed her arm, and made him feel
The muscles firm and strong as steel
Under the rippling satin skin.
And she could cook and she could spin —
Had found some time for school, as well,
Could read and write and add and spell.
And she — well he had heard her sing.
She liked that best of anything,
Knew of old ballet-songs a score —
Could even pick the dulcimore.
And so, while running on, one day,
She, half-unconscious, led the way
To their small cabin, in a cove.
It stood amid a little grove
Of feathery locusts, now half bare,
And some gnarled apple-trees were there,
With ripe red apples hanging high.
A row of bee-gums met his eye.
He thought that he had never seen
A mountain home so neat and clean,
When he had followed through the door.
Spotless and white the cabin floor
Shone, like the walls with paper hung.
Over the fire a kettle swung,
And gleaming coppers in a row
Gave back an iridescent glow.
A coverlet of indigo
Or madder, covered every bed.
He heard a step, and turned his head,
To see her mother, where she stood,
Half shy. Her arms were full of wood
She 'd gathered for the evening meal.
He thought he saw her brown eyes steal
Towards Mally. Then she quaintly bowed,
Said that they would both be right proud
If he would stop and "take a night."
But he, who saw the waning light,
Said, half-abruptly, he must go.
What held him back, he did not know.
But, from that hour, that girlish grace,
That eager, vivid, dreaming face
Haunted his dreams. He could not stay
From that bright cabin home a day.
His footsteps ever found the way
Up the blind branch to Mally's cove.
He did not know that it was love
That brought him back. He did not guess
The secret of the happiness
He felt when he was with them there.
He only knew that every care
Had slipped away. He'd found the peace,
The troubled spirit's sweet release,
That he had come so far to seek.
The warning voice had ceased to speak,
As still they wandered up the creek,
Now all on fire with tawny sedge,
Or clambered up a crumbling ledge.
He quite forgot that he was old,
When, seizing his hand, she sought to scold
Him for his flight ahead too fast.
And so the fading autumn passed.
The season soon to winter turned,
But still the ruddy oak-leaves burned
Like beacons. After the first snow,
They went for holly, mistletoe,
To make the little cabin gay.
Once, when he kissed her, half in play,
An instant in his arms she lay,
Then, like a wild thing, turned and fled...
Next day he saw her eyes were red,
But she looked up at him and smiled.
Never had she seemed more a child,
But from that time he felt a shade
Come over her, even when they played;
And often, on their walks, he thought
She seemed more silent and distraught
Than she had been, and wondered why.
Then one day, when they'd wandered high
Through the beech woods, they heard a noise,
And half a dozen village boys
Broke out upon them through the brush.
One spoke to her. He saw her blush,
And when he went for her next day,
He saw the same boy slip away
Like a dark shade, through the dim wood.
Then, in a flash, he understood . . .
One moment he stood there, stricken, still,
Till, summoning his shattered will,
He hurried down the branch again.

His heart was yet too numb for pain,
But through the dull daze of his mind,
He knew that he had left behind
All that he loved, that he was lost,
Yet must go now at any cost —
Never again must see her face.

It haunted him in every place
He passed, as he went stumbling back,
Along the creek. He'd take his pack
Next day, as soon as it was light,
And steal away. All that long night
He lay and listened to his heart.

How could he tell that love would start
There once again, when love seemed dead?
Now he must go, and she would wed
Her mountain boy. But he was glad
She would be happy, hoped the lad
Would treat her well. He could not bear
To think that any sordid care
Should tame that spirit, dull that eye.
Yet he could see the years pass by
Taking their toll. It made him writhe
To think that she, so supple, lithe,
Should lose her free, proud pose some day,
Yet knew it was the mountain way
With women, worn by heavy toil,
Chained down like chattels to the soil.
If only he — he stopped there short.
Not even once must that mad thought
Lodge for a moment in his mind.

His life, he knew, lay all behind,
Hers lay before her, all ahead.
Better for her that he were dead,
Than such a thing had come to pass.
He saw his forty years amass
A fatal barrier between
Their lives. His only dream had been
To go on living by her side.
Perhaps, in time, he might have tried
To teach her, train her, though afraid
To touch her, whom the hills had made
So perfect in her own wild way.
He might have helped her, though. A day
Came back to him, when he had planned
How he could add land to their land,
Build a new house, with barns, buy stock —
Some year-old heifers, and a flock
Of sheep — raise cover crops for corn.
He dreamt that he perhaps was born
To show these mountaineers new ways
To win back wealth. New herds would graze
On these great ridges, now worn bare.
New life would spring up everywhere.
It would be something to redeem
A race. Yet all that was a dream;
And when the dawn began to break,
He rose to dress and wash and take
His pack, and start away once more.
He stood a moment in the door,
To see the creek walls white with hoar.
He knew this sight would be his last,
And with a heavy heart he passed
Down the still sleeping village street,
Hoping he might not chance to meet
Some friend, so hurried on, and soon
Had left the town. A wisp of moon
Swam in the rose above the ridge.
He passed the flimsy swinging bridge
That marked the last cabin on the creek.
Beyond, lay all the world to seek
Another new, remote abode.
Then there, before him, in the road,
Sprang up a figure that he knew.
Mally! With outstretched arms she flew
Straight towards him, round his neck she flung
Them wildly, and her cold lips clung
To his, in one fang desperate kiss.
"How could you go away like this?"
She cried. Sobs swayed her like a storm
That shakes some slender birch. Her form
Quivered and shook in his embrace.
Tears made a mist upon her face,
In the loose tangle of her hair.
He saw that her brown feet were bare.
Cut by the frozen earth, they bled.
She must have come there straight from bed, . . .
She dreamt she'd seen him in this place . . .

An ice-fringed rock-house showed a space
Where they could sit, and he could hold
Her close in his arms, till no more cold.
Then, lightly lifting her, he bore
Her back up the branch to her own door,
And laid her down on her own bed.
There, as she reached, and drew his head
To hers, he knelt beside the child;
And as they kissed again, he smiled
That he'd once thought his life was done,
When it had only just begun!
Old Christmas

"When Joseph was an old man,
An old man was he,
He married Virgin Mary,
The Queen o' Galilee."

"They 's heaps o' folks here still believe
On Christmas — that 's Old Christmas — Eve,
The elders bloom upon the ground,
And critters low and kneel around
In every stall, though none I know
Has seen them kneel, or heard them low,
Unless, maybe, 't was Judith Daughn,
And she 's been dead these years agone.
But, as a girl, I 'member well
How, sitting at her loom, she 'd tell
Of a strange thing that once befell,
When she lived here upon this creek
With Jason. I 've heard old folks speak
Of their log-house, when it was new.
All kinds of colored lilies grew,
On bushes, to the very door;
And Jason laid a puncheon floor,
And framed a table and a bed
For Judith. They had just been wed,
When they came here from mouth o' Ball.
Judith, you see, she was a Hall,
And all her folks was mighty sore
When she took up with Jason; for
They long had been a row between
The Daughns and Halls. The Daughns was mean.
Jim Daughn, he killed Dalt Hall, and then
Dalt's brother got one of their men.
And so, for years, the fighting went,
With every sort o' devilment,
Till Jason saw Judith one fall day.
"He 'd ridden up the creek a way
To where, beyond a beechen wood,
Hunt Hall's big double log-house stood,
Screened by some pawpaws turning red.
Then, as he turned his horse's head
Towards home, he stopped. There in the bed
Of the bright creek, he saw a sight —
A slim young thing pressed out the white
Sheep's wool, with whiter, glancing feet,
And, with her hands, held up the neat
Dark linsey skirt, so as to show
The gay red Petticoat below.
She did not see him, and he drew
Back in the bushes, lest his view
Should startle her, so shy she seemed.
He closed his eyes, half thought he dreamed.
But, when he opened them once more,
He saw her standing, as before,
In her brown basket, and her feet
Moved on to some still music's beat.
"T was Judith. Soon he learned her name,
And soon a chance to meet her came.
Then love, for both, sprang swift and sweet —
The sweeter, that they had to meet
In secret on the mountain-side,
Till one o' Judith's brothers spied
Upon them. Then her father swore
That she should never dark his door
Again, if she saw Jason. So
The lovers fixed it up to go
Away one night, and straight came here,
Where they grew fonder every year —
Most like young lovers, you would say.
Folks hereabouts admired the way
Jason would fetch and haul for Jude,
Draw water, cut and stack the wood,
Fix fires, call, feed, and milk the cows,
Do women's work about the house.
For she was weak-like, but would go
Along behind him with her hoe
All summer. For she loved to feel
The hot earth crumble 'neath her heel.
And she could sew, and tread the loom
Jason had built her in the room.
There she would sit — I see her yet —
Weaving a woolen coverlet,
Day after winter day, till night.
' Log Cabin' was her favorite,
Unless 't was 'Star o' Bethlehem.'
For years she 'd studied over them
Strange words, she said. For, stranger, then
They was no foreign preacher-men
Came to these mountains. She 'd not heard
O' Bible stories ary word,
And though she 'd learned The 'Cherry Tree'
A-setting on her mammy's knee,
She 'd no idea what them words mean
'Bout Virgin Mary being Queen
O' Galilee, and babies born
In some strange way, on Christmas morn. . . .

"For Christmas, then, was but a day
When boys and gals grew rude and gay,
And men and women drank their store
O' licker, played the dulcimer,
And danced, and sang, and shot some, too.
It was a mighty feisty crew
Lived on the creek in them old days.
But Judith and Jason scorned such ways.
Quiet and peaceful-like they went
About their work, and was content —
Or would have been, but for one thing.
They warn't no child to play and sing
All day upon the puncheon floor.
At first they had not minded. For
They had enough o' work to do
To cook, hoe, spin, and keep them two.
They was right poor. But came a time
When Jason throve, and crops was prime,
And then they thought it would be sweet
To hear a baby's running feet
About the cabin; and soon Jude
Got studying, began to brood.
What would she do when she was old,
With no young hand her hand to hold,
And no young lips to teach to sing
'The Cherry Tree,' or anything
Her mother taught her on her knee?
Jason tried hard to set her free
From such sick fancies. Jason, too,
Wanted a child, but now he knew
'T was hopeless — they 'd been married years —
And thought it foolish to waste tears
On something that could never be.

He had Jude anyway... But she
Listened unmoved to all he said.

A hunger grew in her, a dread,
Until the thought became a craze,
And she would sit for days and days
Before the fire; and then, that spring,
When the leaves came, the poor cracked thing
 Took to a sort o' wandering
Along the creek.

"As the earth stirred
With sweet new life, in bud and bird,
In orchards bowering each abode
She passed upon the rude creek road,
With pink-tipped laurel drifted high,
Something within her, strange and shy,
Seemed also stirring with new life.
She was no more a childless wife,
But mother. Then, when summer came,
Searing the hillsides with fierce flame,
About her neck, sun-browned and bare,
She felt a baby's arms cling there.
But, with the autumn days, when all
The fading leaves began to fall,
And dull skies, like a leaden pall,
Closed down upon the creek again,
She knew the same dull ache and pain.
And times when mournful winds did blow,
She wandered restless to and fro
Like a lost leaf. And once she sought
A witch, who dwelt near by, and taught
Her magic charms to croon at night —
Strange charms that filled her with affright,
And made her sleep a troubled sleep.

"And now no more she called her sheep:
'Cunnana, sheep,' and held a gourd
Of salt, to draw the woolly horde
Down from the ridges to be shorn,
But roamed there with them, night and morn,
Till winter, with sharp cold, set in.
Then, when the first frost formed a thin
Black film of ice upon the creek,
She felt herself grow dull and weak,
And had no more desire to roam.  
When Jason left her there at home,  
She 'd try to weave, but soon would tire,  
And, sitting hands folded, by the fire,  
Would dream, though she remembered naught,  
When he returned, of all she 'd thought  
Through those long hours, and he could stir  
No spark of love or life in her  
Whom once his kiss, or least caress,  
Thrilled through and through with tenderness.  

"Now she no more would share his bed.  
A curse was on them both, she said,  
And he was often filled with dread  
Of what the future held in store,  
When far away. For more and more  
His business made him ride abroad,  
And he 'd increased their little hoard  
By many a lucky timber trade;  
Yet could not see that wealth had made  
Them any gayer. He grew sad,  
And would have given all they had  
To be again poor lass, poor lad,  
But loving, and with no dark screen  
Such as had lately grown between  
Their lives.  

"It chanced he had to leave  
Judith alone on Christmas Eve.  
You see, like I explained before,  
Christmas, to them two, meant no more  
Than any other, common day.  
So, when she saw him ride away  
Upon his high, broad-chested roan,  
It was not strange to be alone  
That day of all. The hours had flown  
Fast as the soft flakes fell to hide  
The cliffs across the creek outside,  
Till came a wind, snow turned to hail,  
And smote the log roof like a flail.  

"Before she knew it, it was dark.  
She might have slept a little. Hark!  
Was it a knocking that she heard?  
Judith, still drowsing, turned and stirred  
In her low chair before the fire,
And listened. The wind had risen higher. . . .
Then that soft knocking came again.
'T was late — too late — for homeless men
To be abroad, and shelter claim. . . .
Then still again that tap, tap, came,
Heard now more clearly than before.
She started slowly towards the door,
Then stopped uncertain. Should she go
And open it? She did not know . . .
The mountain folks is clever, but,
When there 's no men — keep the door shut.
That 's what us women aim to do;
For there 's a mighty reckless crew
On every creek. Some strangers, too,
Is powerful bad. 'T ain't safe nohow
To let them in. But Judith, now,
Was right compassionate, could bear
To let none stay in the black air,
When they was warmth and light within.
So, when she heard the knocks begin
Once more, sha went and raised the bars,
Opened the door. She said the stars
Seemed to sing out, they was so bright.
They filled the dusky room with light.
They was no more o' hail and wind.
At first her blinking eyes could find
No folks outside. But then she knew
Right close beside her, they was two —
One, an old man, whose back was round,
And whose gray beard most swept the ground.
He was afoot, but led an ass,
And on its back there sat a lass —
Or woman. Jude could hardly tell
Which, she was bundled up so well,
With head bowed down upon her breast.
The old man said: 'May we find rest
And shelter here, for one short night?
We must be on our way ere light.'
"Then Judith offered them her bed.
The old man smiled, but shook his head,
And, for a second, his bright eye,
Beneath dark brows, held hers. 'Where lie
Your beasts, warm-bedded, on their straw,
We, too, must rest.' Then Judith saw
She could not hope to turn his mind,
So led them up the branch behind
The log-house, to the barn, where all
The critters was kept safe in stall,
Lifted the latch, and let them in,
Brought corn and fodder from the bin
To feed the ass, strewed roughness round
To make a bed upon the ground
For the two strangers, left them there,
And went back to her fire and chair.

"She must have dozed like half the night,
But woke to see a dazzling light
That streamed down through the roof o'erhead.
Then something seemed to draw her feet
Back to the door. She flung it wide.
The glistening world gleamed white outside,
With starlight. They was even more
Stars than they had been before,
Set in the sky, from east to west.
But one outshone there all the rest,
Straight over the shed that sheltered them,
The strangers 'Star o' Bethlehem!'
'T was a strange fancy in her head
That made her say them words. She sped
Back up the branch. 'T was light as day,
And, through the barn logs, chinked with clay,
She saw another light within.
And then she heard the strangest din
O' critters lowing, and she heard
A sweeter cry than any bird,
When calling to its mate, can sing.
She clutched her breast, half staggering
Upon the threshold.

"What she saw,
When she had crossed it, on the straw,
For years she could not clearly say.
But then a preacher came one day,
When she was old. And, stranger, he
Sort o' stirred up her memory
With his old Bible stories, so
She saw the cows kneel in a row,
Around the bed. The old man slept
Beside the lass, who closely kept,
While lying on her side, to rest,
A newborn baby at her breast.

"But, even as Judith looked, the light
That bathed them both, became less bright.
Slowly their forms began to fade.
Then Judith gave one cry, and made
A quick step forward, reeled, and fell.
Next evening Jason found her.

"Well,
I reckon, stranger, that 's most all... .
Was Judith hurted by her fall?
No, that 's the queerest part. They say
That in the soundest sleep she lay,
While, as her breathing lips half smiled,
Her arms seemed clasped to keep a child.
And, from that day, she was content.
So maybe 't was a vision sent
By Him, Who sees things clear and plain,
To fill her heart, and ease her pain."
Prince O' Peace

"So you've heard Uncle Ezra preach?
I reckon old Ezra still can teach
Them smart young fellers a thing or two.
There ain't been one I ever knew
Could beat him slinging words about,
Wrastling in prayer, or lining out
A hymn for all the saved to sing,
Or washing feet, or anything.
But Ezra never was the same
Since them far days, when Prince first came.
What Prince? Prince Dillon, Prince o' Peace!
He's working now on the police
Up north somewhere — at Cincinnater,
Or Louisville. It does n't matter
Just where it is. But he lived here
Both boy and man for twenty year,
'Cept when he stayed a while out west
In Oklahoma. Could n't rest
Long, though, he said, in that big plain,
So he came drifting home again
To see the hills. But 't warn't no use.
Folks said that he 'd plumb cooked his goose,
And ran him off. What for? Well, son,
They 's some strange things been said and done
On this here creek within my time,
But 'em was the strangest. Bet a dime
You never heard how folks on Ball
Got taken in by Ezra Hall,
And by Dan Dillon's wife Maria.
They thought they was a new Messiah
Come straight to save folks on this creek.
You 've heard old Uncle Ezra speak
And make the women howl and cry.
Well, he was then ten times as spry
As he is now, to plead and roar.
Folks came from forty miles and more
In wagons, or on horse and mule,
To hear him at the old log school,
Where Hard Shells held their meetings then,
For Ez don't hold with Free Will men
That think a feller has a chance
To save his soul, 'cause he don't dance
Or drink or swear or shoot or sing,
Or with the women take his fling,
But holds all folks is saved or not
According as they draw a lot,
So does n't matter what you do.
That suited fine the feisty crew
Lived on the creek then in them days.
They was n't keen to mend their ways.
Why should they, when 't was all the same?
Some that was saved had the worst name.
I won't say Ezra was the worst,
Though he was pretty bad, and cursed,
And drank, and carried on a still.
I 've seen him drink and preach until
He could n't hardly stand no more.
Once when he toppled on the floor,
They picked him up, and heard him speak:
' Brethren, the flesh is powerful weak.'
But preachers, they has got a hide
Like common men — same things inside —
So they must have their little dram,
Same as the rest. How Ez could damn
Lost souls to hell, when he got started!
He warn't no soft-tongued, chicken-hearted,
Pale, lily-livered Methodist.
But he would bawl and shake his fist,
And clutch his beard and claw the air.
Once, when he saw old Satan there,
He shied the big Book at his head.
It hit poor Sister Sude instead,
And laid her out along the floor.
Then Ezra shouted: 'Shut the door!'
He swore the devil was in Sude.
They gave her physic, till she spewed,
And I know folks was there that say
They saw a big rat run away
Just then, and slip into a hole.
So Sude was sick, but saved her soul.
"Now, Ezra 's educated, too,
And he 's plumb read the Scriptures through
From Genesis to Revelations,
He 'll show you plain, how all the nations
Is working out along God's plan —
What are the ways he 's mapped for man,
And why hit hain't no use to try
To clamber up into the sky
Without the call that folks must wait.
And he can tell a body straight
If strange dreams mean his soul is sure,
Or sent by Satan as a lure
To git a sinner safe inside —
A trick the Sarpint's often tried.
But you can't fool old Ezra none.
I reckon he 's spoiled a heap o' fun
For the old Boy on this here fork.

"But, son, you 're tired o' hearing me talk
O' Ezra, and you want to know
'Bout Prince o' Peace. Well, happened so,
Must have been back nigh forty year,
Ez began talking kindly queer,
'Bout things was going to happen soon.
Folks would have thought he was a loon
If they 'd not known ole Ezra well.
So when he started in to tell
How he had lamed he was appointed
To lead the way for the Anointed,
Like John the Baptist come again,
He got a lot o' Christian men
And women round him on the creek.
And then one day they heard him speak
The strangest words was ever heard.
He said he saw a snow-white bird
A-circling there above his head.
That was the Holy Ghost, he said,
And soon they 'd see the Blessed Son
Right there among them. Everyone
Jumped-like at that. But Dillon's wife,
Maria, might have felt a knife,
So high she jumped, so loud she cried.
She fetched her hand to her left side,
Like she had had a sudden pain,
Then started jumping might and main
Once more, and shouted big and loud —
Something about a soft white cloud
That seemed to muffle her around.
Sudden she fell flat on the ground,
Like she was dead. 'T was near her time.
Next day she gave birth to a prime
Big boy. When she could speak,
She swore, her voice low-like and weak,
No earthly father got the brat.
Dan Dillon kindly grinned at that.
But no one took much stock in Dan,
For he was a durned Republican.
What 's more, he 'd never joined the church,
So folks just kindly let him perch
Out on the bars, and chew his quid,
While they piled in to see the kid,
And the kid's maw. 'Tween you and me,
They war n't such a hell o' a lot to see.
Two kids is like as two dried peas.
But old Aunt Sal flopped on her knees,
And fell to singing hymns o' praise.
Then the thing broke out like a blaze
Once it gits started in the cane.
They shouted: 'The lamb has come again!'
And started kissing and embracing.
And all the time folks came a-racing
From up the creek, till they was more
Than could find places on the floor.
And a big crowd got jammed outside,
Like logs in the creek, when they 's a tide.
It seemed to git bigger every minute —
Must have been nigh a hundred in it,
When preacher Ez came riding up.
'T was plain he must have had a sup
Or two. He was a bit unsteady,
But half a dozen hands was ready
To help him off his horse and through
The crowd. Then he was lost to view
Inside the house. But soon he bore
The kid out through the open door,
And took his place, where all could see,
Under a flowering locust tree.
'T was powerful hard for him to stand.
He gave a lurch, then raised his hand.

"Brethren," he cried, 'the Word has spoke.
The Golden Candlestick was broke,
But now God rears it up anew
To be a sign to me and you,
That Holy Scriptures is fulfilled.
Hit looks to me like He has willed
To build His Kingdom on this creek.
You folks all heard the Spirit speak,
And now you see this Kid is sent
To be for us an Ornament.
We don't deserve him none, nohow.
We hain't done much but drink and row,
But now our meanness' got to cease.
'T won't do to have the Prince o' Peace
Grow up in such a feisty crew
Like we 've been here, both me and you.
For I 've been bad as all the rest.
Got licker underneath my vest
This minute, but I 'm going to quit.'
He took a bottle out and hit
It on a rock so hard it broke.
Then all the other brethren spoke
And 'lowed that they would foller suit.
One drew a gun out of his boot,
And threw the thing upon the ground.
One minute, and there was a mound
O' weapons there, and bottles, too.
I could n't half believe 't was true,
And swore such doings could n't last.
But, friend, the months began to pass,
And not a single one backslid.
Some may have, but they kept it hid.
And such a place you never saw
As this creek then. Folks kept the law,
And spent their time in song and prayer,
Or they would stand around and stare
At that strange kid. Dan did n't dare
To say a word — just grinned and whittled.
The neighbors kept Maria vittled.
So Dan, who allus was a shirk,
Sort o' set back, and would n't work.
Why should he, when they was enough
O' greasy beans and other stuff,
For him to have his pickings too?
"Well, time went on, and soon months grew
To years. It seemed 't was Kingdom Come.

Something had struck the Devil dumb
And kept him safe down there below.
Meantime the kid began to grow.
He was a frisky little chap, —
Even when on his mammy's lap,
Would beat her breast, and make a fuss.

At two he started in to cuss
As smart as other kids at four;
And when he could toddle on the floor,
One day he grabbed and killed a cat.
Folks kindly shook their heads at that.
'T warn't hardly like the Prince o' Peace....

Soon he was chasing hens and geese
With sticks and stones, and he could fling
And hit an eagle on the wing.
I saw him once. When he was six,
He was a reg'lar bag o' tricks.
There was n't much he could n't do.
At seven he lared to drink and chew,
To shoot and scrap and use a knife.
He stole one from a neighbor's wife,
Took it to school, and stuck a kid,
Who would n't do what he was bid.
For Prince was bound to have his way,
And he was bad. Stranger, one day
That infant took a franzy spell,
And started in, like bloody hell,
To clear the schoolroom. 'T was a sight,
They say, to see him kick and bite.
He made the teacher look a fool.
When he was eight, he burned the school,
And stole his paw's best gun, and swore
He did n't aim to larn no more.
At nine he looted Perkins' mill
And stole the stuff to make a still.
The sheriff had to nab him then.
They clapped him into jail at ten.
He did n't seem to mind a bit.
In fact, he rather favored it.
For he could sit and pick and sing
All day, 'thout doing anything
But eat and sleep, till he was tired,
Then got him things somehow, and fired
The jail, one night, and slipped away.
All winter in the hills he lay,
And built him there a little shack.
That spring, the sheriff brung him back.
They 'd built a new jail to put him in,
But 't would n't hold that child o' sin —
For most folks now, they plainly saw
That if Prince had no earthly paw,
Hit was the Devil fathered him!

"So things went on, and as the limb
Grew worse, the faithful fell off fast.
Old Uncle Ezra was the last
To own he 'd made a big mistake.
Yet something came at last to shake
Even him. When Prince was most a man,
He formed a kind o' Ku Klux Klan
With no-'count boys he 'd led astray.
They hid up in the hills all day,
But rode for miles around at night,
Burned barns, gave godly folks a fright.
And, stranger, them things warn't the worst.
They warn't a decent girl that durst
After 't was dark, put out her head.
They lay and shivered there in bed,
When they heard Prince's band ride by
The house, like hell, with whoop and cry.

"But they was one was kindly wild,
Like Prince. She warn't much more 'n a child,
Yet she was most a woman grown,
And had a temper of her own,
That made the fellers most afraid.
So Prince, he vowed he 'd have the maid,
And went to take her, while 't was light.
He found her . . . She tried hard to fight.
She kicked, she bit, she tore his hair.
Her brothers tried to force the pair
Apart, but Prince, he had his men.
By God, he tamed her there and then! . . .
And she, she loved him from that day.
One night he spirited her away,
And afterwards she 'd always go,
Dressed in boys' clothes, like Jackaro,
Riding with him and his wild clan.
She liked to think she was a man.
She was one pretty nigh, and yet,
A woman may sometimes forget
She is a woman, for a spell,
Then something happens . . .

Stranger, well,
I don't know as I need to tell
You what it was reminded Nance
That something more than coat and pants
Is needed to turn gals to boys.
One night she fainted from the noise
The fellers made, who drank and sang.
Next day the whole dammed country rang
With word that Nance had had a son.
Folks knew that Prince must be the one.
But then 't was clear he was a man,
Like all the rest. The story ran
From house to house, with lightning speed,
That Prince was not the Devil's breed,
More than Jehovah's. When folks knew
That much, they knew what else to do.
They met that night at Perkins' store,
Went up, and battered down the door
O' Prince's shack. They found him there
Alone with Nance. They took the pair —
They let the hussy keep her kid —
And set them both upon a skid,
Then slid them 'down the timber slide.
You bet that Prince took on and cried.
But 't warn't no use. His hands was tied.
So was his feet. They had him fast.
And when they got them down at last,
They covered Prince with boiling tar,
And rode him round upon a bar,
Till he could n't hardly ride no more,
Then threwed them both upon the floor
Of a jolt wagon, bound them down,
And drove them off to Jackson town,
Bought tickets, put them on the train . . .

"I said that Prince came back again
One year, but folks had not forgot,
And made things so all-fired hot,
That he was glad to git away.
He hain't been back here since that day,
And wont, I reckon, for a spell . . .
Folks git along now pretty well
Without no princes from above.
And Uncle Ezra preaches love —
'Cept for the Soft Shells — does n't seek
To build no Kingdom on this creek,
No more, but kindly lets things go
Like they 's intended, here below."
"Yes, man, 't was like the tale you read
From that there Bible-book, which said
How Saul loved David, and did send
For him to come and be his friend;
How David played before the king
A dulcimore, or some such thing,
Till jealous-hearted Saul did fling
His javelin, to kill the lad,
And all the rest. Our Saul was bad
Just thataway. 'T is queer the name
O' both them two should be the same
As your old Bible folks. Big Saul —
That's how we always used to' call
Saul Spencer, up on Abner's Run,
Who had most land, and the best gun
In all these parts. I reckon none
Made no more 'com, nor killed more men.
For he was mean. I know of ten
He 'counted for. He pined to fight,
When he got drunk. He drank a sight,
Though mostly he managed to keep sober
From May or June, down through October.
But when the crops was harvested,
And he 'd unhitched the old mule sled,
He 'd git a gallon, go to bed,
And there he 'd lie, and drink and drink,
Till a queer notion made him think
He 'd like to hear some music; for
Big Saul, he loved the dulcimore,
And them song-ballets you folks say
Was fetched from countries far away.
Then he 'd send Dice, his daughter, down
The branch, to fetch young David Brown,
Who was the head man on this creek,
To pick the strings, and make them speak.
"You see, young David taught the school,
So he had heaps o' time to fool
With dulcimores. They say he made,
With his own hands, the one he played.
It was the prettiest instrument,
Of best black walnut, shaped and bent
So slick, and boxed so tight and true,
With little wires, and horse's glue,
That 't was no wonder it could sing.
You only had to touch the thing,
To hear it, like it had a soul,
Whisper so soft, through each hearthole.
But when young David cut his quill,
And tightened up the strings, until
They was in tune, then you 'd allow
A bird was shut inside, somehow,
Singing his heart out, fit to die.
And so Big Saul would lie and lie,
Half drunk, and listen, with his eye
Fixed on young David, who set there
Beside the bed, on tilted chair,
And played; and, if he stopped, Big Saul
Would take another sup, and bawl
For him to sing and play some more.
'T was lucky David had a store
O' lonesome tunes, and fast ones, too.
' The Mary Golden Tree,' he knew,
' The Little Mohee,' and 'Jackaro,'
'Sourwood Mountain,' 'Rosin the Bow,'
How Barbary Allen killed her friend,
How Lawyer Marcum met his end,
And others, more than I could say,
If I stood talking here all day.
And, stranger, hit was sure a sight
On airt, to see them there all night.
For Saul made David sing and play
Sometimes till nearly break o' day.
"How was the way the row began?
Well, Saul, he was a widder-man.
When his poor wife, Melindy, died,
He buried her up there beside
Her babies. She 'd had one each year,
But found it powerful hard to rear
The puny things. Six died in all.
And so, when she went too, Big Saul
Had for the lot a funeral,
The feistiest ever on this fork.
Ten Babtist preachers came to talk —
Two niggers — and there was a sight
O' folks who stayed and drank all night —
Some shooting, too, — one was hurt bad.
Young David then was but a lad,
But six feet in his socks he stood,
And he could drink and shoot as good
As any man. That was the way
Saul took to David. From that day
They was most brothers, like I said,
Till David kindly got ahead
O' Saul, with one o' Dallin's daughters,
Who lived across on Cutsin waters.

"She was a pretty little thing,
With lips like laurel in the spring,
With sparkling eyes, like some deep pool
Beneath a rock-house, clear and cool,
And softly curving cheeks, whose blush
Flamed like a winter hollybush.
And first she seemed to favor Saul,
For he was rich, and her folks all
Was poor as poor, and paid corn rent.
But one day, when he slicked and went
Over to Cutshin, there he found
Young David sort o' setting round,
As if he lived there, and Dal's Sue,
Pretty and pink, dressed up in blue,
Had hardly ary word to say
To him; and, reg'lar, from that day,
When he rode up, he found Dave there,
And once he came upon the pair
Hugging and kissing by the gate.
Then all Saul's loving turned to hate,
And when he sent for Dave to sing,
He lay there sily fingering
The trigger of the gun he kept
In bed beside him, while he slept.
And when Dave came, he felt an itch
To give the plaguy thing a twitch,
And finish David there and then.
But soon the longing came again
For one more tune, and he would stay
His hand, to hear him sing and play,
Swearing each tune should be the last.
But, as young David swiftly passed
From tune to tune, Saul could not bring
Himself to draw and pull the thing.
And David, stopping for a breath,
Had no idea he 'd been near death.
And yet he was no fool. He knew
That Saul was sore because o' Sue,
That 't was the music held him fast,
And wondered how long the spell would last.

"So things went on all through the fall,
Till nearly Christmas. Folks saw Saul
Was getting meaner every day,
And counselled Dave to keep away.
But Dave just only kindly smiled.
He was right peaceful, though, when riled,
He never was afraid to fight.
So he just strapped his gun on tight
Under his arm, and went next night
Saul sent for him, like times before.
But one night, when he 'd passed the door,
He saw that Saul was feeling bad.
He 'd drunk up all the stuff he 'd had
That morning from Bill Abner's still,
And David knew he aimed to kill
Him then, if he could find the will.
But David showed he did n't care,
Said, 'Howdy, Saul,' and took his chair,
Tuned up, and then, as Saul's hand crept
Along his side, Dave's fingers swept
The strings, and he began to sing.

"It was a song about the spring,
How swift along the creek it came,
Licking the hillsides like a flame,
Starting each branch the drought had dried,
Till down the creek there swept a tide
That great trees on its bosom bore.
Then, touching more soft his dulcimore,
He sang of love, how it did start
Anew, each spring, in every heart,
And how, above all else, 't is sweet
For lovers in green groves to meet,
When trees with birds are twittering.

"So, without stopping, Dave did sing
For most an hour, so loud and well
The music seemed to cast a spell
On Saul, whose hand no longer crept
To reach his gun. His eyes half slept,
And, as he lay there, tranced and still,
Dave knew that he had lost the will,
Once more, to do him any ill.
He smiled, sang on, and then he, too,
Forgot himself in dreams of Sue.
So, as he sang of love, and played,
It seemed as if with her he strayed
In the green grove, a-fire with spring,
And heard young birds twit-twit-tittering.

"Then suddenly a string went snap!
The thing lay silent on his lap,
And he stopped singing. In his head
Something that dreamed, seemed snapped instead
Of on the dulcimore. Saul, too,
Felt the thing break. Swiftly he drew...
The ball just missed Dave's breast to bore
Right through his darling dulcimore.

"I tell you, 't was a narrow squeak,
And David slipped out on the creek
Right smart, you bet; for David saw
He had n't any chance to draw.
Besides, he did n't want to fight
With Saul, his friend. But, from that night,
He went no more to sing for Saul,
Who still would send his Dice to call
For David, at the school, to play.
But David found a better way
To spend his nights. He married Sue.
And then Big Saul, he married, too,—
A widow, who turned out a shrew,
Took all his money, stopped his drink.
After a while, she made him think
He 'd got religion. He joined the church,
Feeling as lonely as a perch
Left in some measly minnow pool,
And died, at last, kicked by his mule."
The Strange Woman

"What spell was on me when I wed
This brutal boy who seeks my bed
Only when drunk. His kiss — his sight —
I loathe. I shall kill him to-night,
If he comes back as last he came,
With bloodshot eyes, with face aflame,
Making foul jest of my hot shame,
To force what once I freely gave
Ere I became his cabin slave.

"Alas, I know only too well
What charm, what sortilege, what spell
Has driven me hopeless down to hell
In this rude cabin on the creek,
Where even the harsh women speak
With pity of the foreign fool
Who came to teach a mountain school,
And married one of their own men.
They know the breed. I did not — then!

"Yet he was a boy to take the breath
Of one who, lonely unto death,
Longing for love, no longer young,
Saw him that day when first he swung
Down the dull, dusty, straggling street
Of the mean mountain county seat,
Riding alone, with reckless air,
Bold face, and brown, close-curling hair,
Loose-seated on his pacing mare.

"And I, who but the common sort
Of men had known, that sold and bought
And went dull ways in a great town,
Watched him as if he wore a crown —
As if he were some paladin.
I reeled — all round me seemed to spin —
I felt my heart stop still within,
When he, close passing by, gave me
A glance of gay effrontery.
"Of all that followed from that day
When first we met, what shall I say?
He was a boy, I growing old —
There, in few words, the whole is told.
And if he cared, or seemed to care,
'T was that I offered something rare
For him a mountain mother bare —
Among coarse mountain women grew —
I, who was strange and soft and new.

"And I was happy then at first.
It seemed as if, to quench my thirst,
Lifelong, of love and tenderness,
I craved each minute his caress.
It was so very sweet to teach
Him gentler ways, a gentler speech.
Apt pupil then he seemed, and I,
Too proud for pride, no longer shy,
Wax in his hands, could naught deny.

"Even then I might have hoped to hold
Him, had I, weak, but been more bold,
Brazened it out, borne high the shame
That faced me when my baby came.
But when men's talk attacked my name,
Each coarse taunt falling like a flail,
Something within me seemed to quail.
Fool-like, I begged to be his wife.
Sullen he yielded; then this life

"Began. I knew he drank before.
Now, on our wedding-day, he swore
He would be gone for seven days.
He went, came back with eyes aglaze,
Trembling, unstrung, his mind in maze,
His boy's face bloated, dull and old.
He struck me, called me slut and scold.
When I — for still I loved him — tried
To stir some rag of love, of pride.
"And still I might have tried, and borne,  
For his child's sake, his sneers, his scorn,  
Had he been faithful; but he spread,  
Himself, the story how he sped  
From creek to creek, from bed to bed.  
Then last he brought his harlot home,  
And I fled from the house, to roam  
All night, thin-clad, till sick and weak,  
I sank, half-fainting, in the creek.

"That was the end; from that black night,  
I 've hated him; have loathed his sight,  
Have lain for hours till, hearing him come,  
I felt each sense grow sick and numb  
From fear of his approach. God send  
Me strength to-night to make an end  
Of him — and me. Listen! — I hear  
His horses' footfalls ringing clear!  
Each chamber 's filled! Now I 've no fear! . . ."
Will Warner

(Ballad for a Cumberland Broadside)

Shot in the back, in the courthouse square,
By a dog of a Darrell skulking there,
Will Warner staggered and clutched the air.

Clutched the air, and the world went black
For an age, it seemed, then the light came back,
And, as in a dream, he sought the shack.

Shot in the back, so the spine came through
With the spurting blood, as each foot he drew,
Will Warner was near to his death, he knew.

Near to his death, and his heart grew gray.
Each of his brothers had passed this way.
He had paid their score. Who now would pay?

Jeff, as he drank at a creekside spring,
Ned, at the plough, had felt the sting,
Cal, as he rode to his infaring.

But a death for a death the dogs had paid.
Three Darrells low in their graves were laid.
Must the fourth go ever unafraid?

Still as he pondered the unpaid score,
He saw his mother who stood in the door,
As she had stood there thrice before.

Somber and silent, no word she said,
But drew the covers down on the bed
That had held the living and held the dead.

No word she said, but on cat's feet crept
Through the firelit room where her watch she kept
O'er her baby, her least one, who woke and slept.

Woke, then slept but to wake again.
Slept with the weakness, woke with the pain,
And a bee that buzzed and boomed in his brain.
And only once from his lips came a cry.
"Aw, Will, quit that! If ye've got to die,
Die like a Warner!" with flashing eye

Flung his mother. Ere night she had laid him straight,
And all on her shoulders had borne his weight
Up the steep hillside, to the gravehouse gate.

She bore him up and she dug him deep,
And left him alone in the earth to sleep,
Then stumbled back to the shack — to weep.
Young Leatherwood's Dream

In the cabin room, when the day had fled,
Young Leatherwood lay on his pallet-bed,
And a swarm of dreams came round his head.

A swarm of dreams, some dark, some bright,
Some of work, some of play, some of pistol fight,
But the dream that gave him his dear delight,
Was a dream that stayed as the others went:
He had ridden far, and his horse was spent,
When he came to a cabin of gay content.

The cabin stood on a little creek.
It was night, and he heard a fiddle squeak,
And a soft voice out of the darkness speak:

"Get down, Young Leatherwood, get you down.
Long have you wandered by creek and town.
Now enter and put on your silken gown."

Young Leatherwood entered, in strange amaze,
No cabin room, but a hall ablaze
With cressets that blinded his wide-eyed gaze,

As, standing there in the open door,
He watched the dancers who shook the floor,
To the din of the fiddle and dulcimore.

For never, I warrant, was such a sight
Seen in the mountains by any wight,
As Leatherwood saw in his dream that night.

Right there, in place of the rowdy rout
Of a mountain dance, with bully and lout,
Lords and ladies stepped boldly out.

Lord and lady and page and squire
Stepped boldly out in their brave attire,
That blazed and burned in the torches' fire.
And the silken banners that clove and clung
To their staves on the walls with dark damask hung,
Shivered and shook, as the dancers swung
In a surging flood, like a mighty tide,
Where the tallest trees from the mountain ride,
As it sweeps through the creek and the countryside.
Swung hither and thither on nimble feet,
Timing their step to the music's beat —
Leatherwood looked, till, more soft and sweet
Than a cardinal's cry, or a thrush's song,
Came the voice he had heard, from the circling throng:
"Linger, Young Leatherwood, not too long.
"Your silken gown and your crown of state,
And your doeskin shoes for the dancing, wait.
So tire you soon, lest you be late."
Then a hand that he saw not, took his hand
And led him away from the bounding band,
To a little chamber at his command,
Where he stripped off his suit of the butternut brown,
And put on the'shoes and the silken gown.
Then two hands placed on his brow a crown.
And as soon as the crown had touched his head,
He saw right well who his feet had led —
A damsell whose lips and whose cheeks were red,
Whose eyes were like stars, and whose braided hair
Shone like the corn, when the summer air
Ripples across it, bright and fair.
"Now see, Young Leatherwood, will you see,
The maid who hath waited long for thee,
And who, this night, thy love shall be?"
Then she led Young Leatherwood back once more,
Where the feet of the dancers shook the floor,
And down through the press they boldly bore.
And I warrant Young Leatherwood's heart beat high
To feel her soft body against his thigh,
And to look on her snowy breast so nigh.

Then they passed through a door to a little cove,
Where the beech-trees stood in a circling grove,
And fair lovers walked and talked of their love.

"Young Leatherwood, Leatherwood, leal true heart,
I have waited long. Now naught must part —"
Then Leatherwood woke in his bed with a start.

Woke with a start, yet still he seemed
To hold her as close as when he dreamed,
And his head with her lingering love-words teemed.

And all that day, as he held his hoe
On the steep hillside, and followed the row,
He felt through his body her warmth and glow.

And ever, for days, at his side there stood,
In the dim forest, or by the dark flood,
A shape that bewildered Young Leatherwood.
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The Ballad-Collector

Say fellers, did ye see the man passed by here down the creek?
I met wi' him a-hoeing corn, last Wednesday was a week.
I knowed he warn't no mineral man — warn't sharp enough fer that.
He wore a glass stuck in his eye, a little round-like hat,
A coat that had a belt about, and stockings to the knee.
He shore did have the quarest turn I might' nigh ever see.
He was right tall an' powerful thin, an' kindly gitting old.
When he stopped there beside the road, I asked him what he sold.
I 'lowed he was some travelling-man. He had a little pack
All fastened up with straps an' things, he carried on his back.
That 'peared to tickle him a lot. He laughed an' waved his hand,
Then jabbered some strange furritin words I couldn't understand.
But pretty soon I made it out, of all unlikely things,
He'd come down here to gather up them songs our children sings —
Them silly little ballet-songs, like 'Lone an' Lonesome Low,'
'The Bailiff's Daughter o' Islington,' 'Brown Gal,' and 'Jackaro.'
I told him then our eldest gal, Lurany, knowed a sight
O' such-like songs, an' said for him to come an' take a night.
I kindly liked the feller's looks, wanted to hear him talk
About the war. He said he'd come. 'Bout six we seed him walk
Along the branch an' up the path. I made him take a chair,
Then he pulled out an' lit a pipe, like my ole woman there.
Well, supper was ready right at once, but when we'd eat an' quit,
I said we'd move in by the fire, an' sing about a bit.
Lurany, an' her sister Sue, set down there on the bed,
An' started in right smart to howl the songs the stranger said,
And one it seemed he'd never heard, 'The Inconstant True Lover.'
He liked that more than all the rest, an' made 'em sing it over
A dozen times, or maybe more, an' wrote it in a book.
I hitched my chair across the floor an' tried to git a look
To see them silly words put down in writing, but, landsake,
All I could see was little marks like tracks the chickens make.
Then pretty soon, when them two gals had sung up all they knew,
It sort o' came upon my mind I had a song or two,
Or used to have, when I was young, an' cut an' awful swell:
'John Henry, the Steel-Driving Man,' 'Cuckoo,' and 'Drunkard's Hell.'
I thought pine-blank he'd like that last. It was my favorite.
'Garbage!' he cried, when I began. That made me want to fight.
I started in to take that dude an' lay him out there flat.
I'd never let no furriner run over me like that!
But them two gals jumped off the bed, pinned me an' held me back
I 'lowed the feller'd leave right then, light out, an' hit the track.
But law, he warn't a bit a-feered, just stood still on the floor,
An' looked around. Then, sudden like, he spied my dulcimore.
It hung up on the fireboard there, above my rifle-gun.
I'd had a mind to trade it off for fiddle or banjo, one,
But seemed I couldn't bring myself to let the old thing go.
I always liked to hear the sound it made, so sweet an' low,
Though Sue turns up her nose at it — she picks the organ fine —
An' begs at me to order a guitar or mandoline.
'What in the deuce do you call that?' he cried, an' dropped his book,
Then polished up his little glass to git a better look.
I clean forgot that I was mad, retched up an' took it down.
It sort o' tickled me to see a feller from the town
Who'd never seed a dulcimore. I went an' cut a quill,
Then set right there an' picked fer him an hour or two, until
'Twas time fer laying down in bed. Next morning, when he woke
What do you reckon 'twas he said, the firstest word he spoke?
'I shore must have that dulcimore,' an' asked me what I'd take.
I figgered what a fiddle'd cost, an' if I couldn't make
Another dulcimore as good, if I should take a spell
O' rheumatiz around next fall, then told him how I'd sell.
I kindly thought he'd try to trade, and named it pretty high.
But, boys, he never said a word, an' never bat an eye,
Jest paid the money, said goodbye, an' shook hands all around.
(He claimed we was the cleverest folks he'd might' nigh ever found,)
Then buckled on his little pack, picked up the dulcimore,
An' started down the branch. He was a quare-turned feller, shore!
The Blind Boy

Back from the blue-grass country, and I'm glad I'm home again.  
A boy like me can't find his way along the level plain.  
But here in the narrow valley, where the blind don't miss the sky,  
They's the water of the singing stream for me to wander by.  
And just one trail leads up the creek, and just one trail leads down,  
Not like the roads that fork and cross in countryside and town.

So when I'm done with filling quills to feed by mother's loom,  
And tired o' picking banjo tunes or binding up the broom,  
I ramble up and down Quicksand for miles and miles each day,  
Under the cliffs and by the bank, and never lose my way,  
And hear a sight o' pretty sounds that sort o' fill my mind,  
And make me dream, till I forget, almost, that I am blind.
The British Lady

I saw a British Lady, as I came down the lane.
Against the cliffs above the creek, it made a crimson stain.
O bright-winged bird, when shall I see my pretty boy again?

I saw him first when last I saw you there in yonder tree,
And knew I was the maid for him, he was the man for me.
For she who sees your glowing wings, her husband soon shall see.

My husband! So he would have been, had not the war-call torn
Him from my arms, though not my heart, and left me here to mourn
Alone, but for my little babe — my little babe unborn.
The Child and the Rattler

Pretty snake, I see you glide
From the brush heap, by my side.
Come here closer, if you wish,
Eat with me from my own dish
Mammy filled with mush and cream.
I like to see your golden gleam,
Hear the pretty sound you make.
You are hungry, poor old snake!
Wisht I had a little meat —
A chicken wing for you to eat.
Stop! You can't have all my share!
That's your side, right over there!
Didn't you hear what I said?
I'll hit you, then, old speckly-head!

[The child hits the snake with its spoon, the snake coils, strikes the child, and glides away.]

There! You've hurt me, snake, yet I
Cannot seem to scream or cry.
Something grips me, holds me still.
Wait till daddy comes from mill.
He'll go hunt you from that heap.
Now I only want to sleep.
[Drowsily.] I'll tell daddy, when I wake.
Then he'll kill you . . . bad old . . . snake!
The Doubles

One day as I lingered beside a deep pool,
I saw a young maiden, who rode a dark mule.
All in white from her head to her foot she was dressed —
The trim little foot in the steel stirrup pressed —
While the cloth of her saddle was flowered with red,
And a gay crimson tassel swung at her steed's head.

She rode, and the bridle that hung from her hand,
So slender and white, held my heart in a band.
And I longed to look full on the face of the maid,
That the brim of her sunbonnet shrouded with shade.
I stopped her, and laid a bold hand on her rein,
But drew back in horror, and dropped it again.

For the sunbonnet sheltered no smiling young face,
But a skull that leered out, with a grinning grimace,
Through sockets uncurtained and bony and bare.
I shrank, with cold sweat, from that terrible stare,
And, gazing down into the depths of the pool,
Saw Death mirrored there, on the back of a mule.
The Feudist on the War

Well, stranger, what about the war? You say you're from New York. Then you must know a whole heap more than folks on Folger's Fork, who don't go stirring much abroad, can scarcely read the news. Yet sit at night here by the fire, and kindly give their views on how the thing started, how 'twill end. Will our boys have to go away across the briny deep? We wouldn't mind it so if we could fight it out at home. Then all would take a hand, squander the Germans mightily, and drive them from the land. Us mountain fellers loves to fight. But s'pose them vessels sank out yonder there, with all on board, before they hit the bank? Hit's powerful hard for us to cross this creek, when they's a tide, and I allow the ocean's more'n a hundred times as wide as any creek, or river, too — a hundred times as deep. Yet Sunday last our preacher told the mothers not to weep, for God would keep the ones they loved as safely in His care, beneath the sea, as though they lay on some green point up there above the waving fields o' corn, and underneath the sky. So we will send them forth to fight, and die — if they must die!
The Fiddler

Fiddler, fiddler, where do you go
On your pieded nag, with fiddle and bow?

"To the Breaks o' Ball they have sent for me
To fiddle all night at a Christmas tree."

"Fiddler, fiddler, the Breaks are far,
The nights are dark, with never a star,
The roads are rough, and the creeks are wide,
With never a light your steps to guide.
So fiddler, fiddler, get you down,
And play for the Hales o' Harlan town,
Play for the Hales and stay all night,
Then start for the Breaks with the dawning light."

"For the Hales in their house I dare not play.
Tonight their foes line all the way,
And I heard one say, as I rode by:
'Who stays with the Hales, with the Hales shall die.'"

"Fiddler, fiddler, have no fear.
My four brave sons with their guns are here,
And all in their graves must first lie dead,
Ere harm can come to a stranger's head,
When the Hales have opened to him their door.
So fiddler, fiddler, say no more,
But get you down, for the hour grows late,
And lead your nag through the swinging gate."

So he got him down, and he took his seat
At the board, where they gave him bread and meat,
And many a dram from the bucket nigh,
Till the fiddler's fearful heart beat high,
And he thought no more of the boastful word
The Deans had spoken, and he had heard.

"Now, fiddler, fiddler, take you a chair,
And draw it up to the hearthside there.
For again tonight I long to hear
'Weevilly Wheat' and 'Forked Deer.'
And each of my four stout sons shall stand
At a door, with his rifle-gun in hand.  
So fiddler, fiddler, have no care  
For what lurks low in the black night air."

So the fiddler tightened up his bow,  
And over the strings he drew it slow,  
With a wistful, wavering, mournful sound,  
Dropped it again, and glanced around  
At each bearded face in the flickering light.  
Then, grasping his fiddle, he held it tight,  
And over the frets his fingers ran,  
As he struck up the tune of "Callahan,"  
So all who sat in that room could see  
How Callahan stepped to the gallows tree,  
And fiddled the piece that he had made,  
While he lay long in the prison shade.  
And not one there in that shadowy room  
But felt in his own dark soul the doom,  
As the soul of the fiddle sobbed and cried,  
Till the lamp burned dim, and the embers died.

"Now fiddler, fiddler, lay you down,  
And sleep as safe in Harlan town,  
As ever at home in your bed you slept."

But the fiddler stirred when the gray dawn crept  
Through the cabin room, and he crossed the floor,  
Where the sleepers lay, to the stout-barred door,  
Drew back the bars, and flung it wide,  
Then stepped to the washing-block outside.

"Now fiddler, fiddler, have you a care.  
Death lurks low in the bushes there.  
Remember the word when you rode by:  
'Who stays with the Hales, with the Hales shall die.'"

But the fiddler's thoughts were far away.  
He must ride to the Christmas tree that day,  
And he dreamed of the dance and the lighted hall  
That awaited him at the Breaks o' Ball,  
Nor heard he a-stealthy step draw near.  
Then a rifle rang out loud and clear,  
And, shot through the heart, the fiddler fell  
From the porch to the earth, beside the well.
"Fiddler, fiddler, where do you go
On your pieded nag, with fiddle and bow?"

"To the Breaks o' Ball they have sent for me
To fiddle all night at a Christmas tree."

"Fiddler, fiddler, the Breaks are far,
The nights are dark, with never a star.
The roads are rough, and the creeks are wide,
With never a light your steps to guide,
And the Christmas tree and the dancers' hall
Shall await you in vain at the Breaks o' Ball."
Invitations

Howdy, boys, howdy, we've gathered the corn,  
The hogs' on the mast, an' the sheep is all shorn. 
Now is the season for frolic an' fun. 
Let's git us a squirrel, I'll gi' ye a gun. 
I know where's a plenty, an' not far to seek. 
Then come along wi' me, boys, on up the creek!

Howdy, boys, howdy, the shades come across. 
It's late to be stirring abroad on a horse. 
Now is the time o' the day for a seat 
By the fire, while the women folks fry us some meat. 
I've killed a fat hog, an' I love ye a sight. 
So come along wi' me, boys, come take a night!
Lullaby

Pretty poppet, do not cry,
Though your mammy's breast be dry.
She will feed you by and by

Soon as pappy brings some meat,
Or some corn, so she can eat
For her precious sugar sweet.

Here they's neither meat nor bread.
Now you sleep so still in bed...
Wake! or pappy'll think you're dead!

Wake, then, pretty poppet, wake!
Don't you feel your mammy shake?...
God on high!... My heart will break!...
"O you ride so hot along the creek, who may you be?"
"We're men who fought with Morgan's band, come up from Tennessee."

"You're men o' Morgan's Rebel band? Then tell us why you go
Each one o' nine, with a new plow-line hung at his saddle-bow?"

"We do not care to tell you why. We ride both night and day
To hunt her out and hang her high, who Morgan did betray."

"And who was she that did this deed, now troopers plainly tell?"
"She lived within the foemen's lines, and Morgan loved her well."

"He loved her well?" "Ay, more than life, and one dark night he rode
By rippling creek and rustling wood, till he came to her abode."

"What did he there the long night through?" "In her soft arms he lay.
But when, at last, he turned and slept, she rose and stole away

"To the stable-yard, and saddled soon, and galloped till she came
To the leader, who stirred within his tent, and told him all her shame."

"What said he then?" "No word he spoke, but spat upon the ground,
Woke one with him who slumbered deep, and straight the word went round

"That Morgan was within their power. A hundred men and more,
Booted and spurred, swept towards the south, till they came to the lady's door.

"They came to the door o' the false lady, who back with them did ride,
And slipping swift from her saddle there, stole soft to Morgan's side.

"'O Morgan, they've come to take you dear!' she made her false voice speak.
And Morgan, who leapt from his bed to the door, looked out upon the creek.

"Looked out upon the creek and saw the cliffs in the gray dawn,
And the close blue ring, like a strangler's string, about the cabin drawn."
"'Now Morgan, Morgan, yield you up. You see we hold you fast!' "
The leader stopped and clutched his breast. Those bold words were his last.

"For Morgan shot him where he stood, then started through the ring. But a crashing volley brought him down, and he lay a lifeless thing.

"He lay a crumpled, lifeless thing, all huddled as he fell, While she stood near and shed no tear, whom Morgan had loved well.

"So that is the reason why we ride, and why you see us go Each one o' nine, with a new plow-line hung at his saddle-bow.

"For east and west and north and south, we hunt the false lady, Who brought about brave Morgan's death, to hang her to a tree."
Mother Goose on Goose Creek

Sing a song of sixpence,
    Pappy's in the pen,
Mammy's riding up the creek
    To git him out agen.

Pappy drank some licker,
    Killed a man named Brown.
Now they say he's helping Doc,
    Down at Frankfort town.

Pappy'll git good manners,
    Larn to read an' write.
Soon he'll run for county clerk.
    Won't that be a sight?
A Mountain Mother

They tell me that my son must die,
And yet I cannot seem to cry.
For he is nearer now, in death,
Than ever since his earliest breath —
Since first I gave him suck, and he
Looked up from my breast and smiled at me —
My little son who should repay
His father's bloody debt some day.

Oh, ay, his borning cost me sore.
The very night my brothers bore
His father home, my pains began.
And I, who should have had my man
To hold me close upon his knee,
Must lie low in my bed and see
The old mid-woman nodding there
Beside the wood-fire, in her chair.

But when, at last, my pains were done,
And to my breast I clutched my son,
I knew what custom I must use.
I took and drew my dead man's shoes
Upon my feet; upon my head
I placed his hat, then from the bed
I struggled up, stood on the ground,
And, though all turned, I walked around

For must have been an hour; to dreen
Myself and make my body clean,
Like my dead man, when still in life.
I made the mid-woman take her knife,
And, when from his back the blood she pressed,
Mix it with milk warm from my breast,
And give it to the child, to make
Him strong for his dead father's sake.

Swiftly more strong I watched him grow.
Yet days and years were all too slow
Till he could hold his father's gun.
Then it was I who taught my son
To handle it, take steady aim.
On bits of board I wrote a name,
And nailed them to a walnut tree,
Or drew a head for him to see.

And all I feared from that first night
Was that some other, upstart, might
Claim vengeance that was his and mine.
One day, I recollect, came nine
Armed men hot riding on his track.
I dared to lie, and turn them back,
Though they'd have killed me, had they known.
The prey was ours — and ours alone.

And then, at last, the day drew nigh...
Each time I bade my boy goodbye,
I felt a nameless dread, a fear,
And something seemed to clutch me here,
When I armed him with my own hand.
To-day he saw the slayer stand
Before the court-house, in the street.
Both fired, both fell, but to his feet

My boy sprang up to shoot again.
There was no need. Two neighbor men
Caught him before once more he fell,
Brought him to me, that he might tell,
With his own lips the tale I've told.
No matter now if, young or old,
I die at last, all in God's plan.
I've known, and I have raised a man...
Pretties

I know a small cabin all bowered in green.
Its walls are worn gray, but its yard is swept clean.
It stands in a lane running down to the creek,
And when I ride by there, I hear a voice speak:
"Get down, get down, stranger, whoever you be,
And have you a pretty, a pretty, from me."

I look and I see an old women who stands
At a gap in the palings, her gifts in her hands —
Her hands that are wrinkled and knotted and brown —
And whose sunbonnet bobs, as she bids me get down:
"Get down, get down, stranger, whoever you be,
And have you a pretty, a pretty, from me.

"They's the prettiest pretties that ever you see,
Cut after the leaves of a green poplar tree,
Of an oak, and a beech, and such other like leaves,
And they's stars and they's hearts for the fond heart that grieves.
So get you down, stranger, whoever you be,
And have you a pretty, a pretty, from me.

"I make them myself, and they's none that can show
Such pretties. I cut them from gay calico,
Red, yellow, and blue, and I sew them up all
In pictures and posies, to put on the wall.
So get you down, stranger, whoever you be,
And have you a pretty, a pretty, from me."

I get down from my horse, and my heart being sore,
I take the most sorrowful heart from her store,
Surrounded by leaves from the tree that no care
Can ever again bring a blossom to bear,
And crowned by the star that once ruled in my sky.
I remount and ride on, but still, faint, comes the cry:
"Get down, get down, stranger, whoever you be,
And have you a pretty, a pretty, from me."
Saint Francis on Quicksand

Folks think, because I preach the Word,
To bush and tree, to beast and bird,
Because I dip a stick or stone,
At times — as if 'twere man alone
That had a soul to save through Grace! —
That I am cracked. They jeer and chase
Me from the church, when I begin
To tell them of their deadly sin
In killing creatures every day.
Last week I saw a squirrel pray
On yonder little leafy limb.
Just then a boy took aim at him
and brought him down. Fierce anger flamed.
I thundered at the boy and named
Him slayer, killer of his kind.
He feared what might be in my mind
And fled — fled faster at my call.
Right there I preached the funeral
Of that poor little furry thing.
And, as I preached, I heard a wing,
Then wing on wing, and I could see
Dim forms of birds in every tree,
And the bright beads of squirrels' eyes.
I felt God's spirit in me rise.
My voice rose to the holy tone.
Folks say they heard me shout and moan
For most a mile. The hills drew near,
The ridges bowed as if to hear,
While overhead the elements
Piled tier on tier their snowy tents,
Where, dark within, my eyes could see
The Father's awful majesty,
And I knew he had heard my call,
Who sees each bird and squirrel fall.
The Sanger's Call

I'm tired. My old hands tremble so
They scarcely now can hold the hoe.
And yet I cannot seem to stay
From yon steep points. Alone to-day
Weary I go to seek for sang,
Where every wooded ridge once rang:
"Hee-pee-oo-oo! Hee-pee-oo-oo-
"Hee-pee! Y ee-ou!"

Alone, alone! Where are they fled,
Who, when the seed grew ripe an.d red,
Climbed high, a happy-hearted throng,
With many an old-time ballet-song,
Then scattered, and he first who found
The berries, made the hollows sound:
"Hee-pee-oo-oo! Hee-pee-oo-oo-
"Hee-pee! Y ee-ou!"

And there was one who climbed with me,
A dark-eyed boy. I seem to see
Even now his laughing face, his curls,
His body slender as a girl's.
Even now seems like I still can here
His voice, like water, singing clear:
"Hee-pee-oo-oo! Hee-pee-oo-oo-
"Hee-pee! Y ee-ou!"

Once, when we two had strayed apart,
I saw a rattler's forked tongue dart,
Saw his bright coils, and heard him sing.
I could not strike the evil thing,
Or run. Sick terror held me fast.
Swooning I stood, but cried at last:
"Hee-pee-oo-oo! Hee-pee-oo-oo-
"Hee-pee! Y ee-ou!"

He heard my stricken cry, and came.
And while the serpent's livid flame
Held me, with its foul magic, still,
I saw him, running, take the hill,
Felt him strike thrice and break the charm,
Then heard, within his circling arm:
"Hee-pee-oo-oo! Hee-pee-oo-oo!
"Hee-pee! Yee-ou!"

We were sworn lovers from that hour,
Promised to wed when trees should flower.
What I sang out, I laid aside
To buy a dress, for me, a bride,
And I went singing, as I found
Each pod of berries on the ground:
"Hee-pee-oo-oo! Hee-pee-oo-oo!
"Hee-pee! Yee-ou!"

All that long winter, in my room,
I shot the shuttle of the loom,
And watched the webs of linen grow
As high and white as drifted snow
That covered every point and all
The slopes where we had heard the call:
"Hee-pee-oo-oo! Hee-pee-oo-oo!
"Hee-pee! Yee-ou!"

Spring came, and as the hour drew near,
There sprang up in my heart a fear,
And nights, as I lay still in bed,
I thought I saw my lover dead,
With his red slayer standing by,
Or woke, and heard a warning cry:
"Hee-pee-oo-oo! Hee-pee-oo-oo!
"Hee-pee! Yee-ou!"

I knew he had a jealous foe.
I begged, I bade him, not to go
To get our papers at the town.
I did not fear folks' talk or frown,
And would have followed him, had he
But whispered, some night, one soft "Hee-pee!
"Hee-pee-oo-oo! Hee-pee-oo-oo!
"Hee-pee! Yee-ou!"

My lover laughed and rode away.
I sat there by my loom all day.
'Twas late that night before I slept.
Next morning, as the gray dawn crept,
Slow-footed, through the silent room,
I saw him laid across the loom:
"Hee-ppee-oo-oo! Hee-ppee-oo-oo!
"Hee-ppee! Yee-ou!"

I felt his hands, and they were cold.
Even in death they kept their hold
Of something — papers folded tight.
I took them from him — 'twas my right —
Our marriage papers, signed and sealed.
Again I saw the snake, and reeled:
"Hee-ppee-oo-oo! Hee-ppee-oo-oo!
"Hee-ppee! Yee-ou!"

Since then I've kept them here inside
My bosom, I, a dead man's bride,
Who've lived for fifty years unwed.
They'll find them on me when I'm dead,
And lay them with me, underground,
Where never more will come the sound:
"Hee-ppee-oo-oo! Hee-ppee-oo-oo!
"Hee-ppee! Yee-ou!"

I'm tired. My old hands tremble so
They scarcely now can hold the hoe.
Yet I am glad . . . I would not stay . . .
Let me but climb once more, to-day,
To look for sanig . . . What's that I hear? . . .
The sangers' call rings loud and clear:
"Hee-ppee-oo-oo! . . . Hee-ppee-oo-oo! . . .
"Hee-ppee! . . . Yee-ou! . . ."
"Singing Carr"

Now glory to the Lord o' Hosts, from Whom all glories are, 
An' glory to His tuneful saints, that live on Singing Carr, 
Where people say no sinful songs, nor ballets new an' fine, 
But spread the Gospel far an' nigh, by singing on the line.

At night, when folks sit by the fire, an' pass the bottle round, 
They're like to hear the little bell, that makes a tinkling sound. 
Then one starts up an' claps his ear, to hear who's calling "nine." 
"It is the Saints o' Carr," he cries, "a-singing on the line!"

"Come, folks, an' hear the Saints o' Carr, they're singing sweet an' loud!" 
Then all put the flat bottle by, an' to the box close crowd, 
So each can listen in his turn, an' slake his soul with wine 
That flows from lips o' Saints o' Carr, a-singing on the line.

They's no corn licker half so good, so pure, so sweet, so strong, 
As music made by Saints o' Carr, in some old Gospel song. 
If you should hear the Methodists, 'twould seem a dismal whine, 
Once you had heard the Carr's Fork Saints a-singing on the line.

But best of all, us folks round here, we loves to hear 'em sing 
That song belongs at funerals, "Been a long time travelling." 
It makes you sort o' think o' death, sends shivers down your spine, 
To hear it sung by Saints o' Carr, upon the people's line.

For each of us at last must die, be buried underground. 
I'm studying if, when safe above, they'll come the tinkling sound, 
Some night, o' that peart little bell. 'Pears like my soul will pine 
To hear, in heaven, the Saints o' Carr, a-singing on the line!
"Sourwood Mountain"

[Andy Johnson, of Bell County, waylaid a man named Hoskins, at the same time shooting Hoskins' little daughter, Biddy, on the wagon seat beside him. For twenty-four hours Johnson would let no one approach the bodies but Hoskins' wife, who watched over them and drove away the hogs.]

Chicken crowing on Sourwood Mountain.

Hey ho diddle dum day.
Get my gun an' I'll go hunting.
Hey ho diddle dum day.

Sun shines hot in Possum Hollow.

Hey ho diddle dum day.
Big hogs root, little pigs wallow.
Hey ho diddle dum day.

Rumbling wheels, little gal singing.

Hey ho diddle dum day.
Rifle crack, the cliffs a-ringing.
Hey ho diddle dum day.

Whiff o' blood comes up the hollow.

Hey ho diddle dum day.
Big hogs run, little pigs follow.
Hey ho diddle dum day.

Bodies in the muck a-lying.

Hey ho diddle dum day.
Little gal dead, old man a-dying.
Hey ho diddle dum day.

Liz sits by, a long switch swinging.

Hey ho diddle dum day.
Drives the hogs an' keeps on singing:
"Hey ho diddle dum day."
Travels [From Nature to Grace]

'Twas in yon field the vision came.  
The corn-clad hillside turned to flame,  
And I, who followed there the row,  
Dazzled and blinded, dropped my hoe,  
Fell to my knees, and could not rise.  
For who that saw, with living eyes,  
A million angels in one band,  
Shining like stars, could hope to stand  
Firm and erect on his two feet?  
At first I thought it was the heat —  
The sun was hot, I was not well.  
The day before I'd took a spell,  
Felt dizzy like, things turned around.  
But, when I looked again, I found  
They was still there, the Seraphim.  
I tried to pray, to start a hymn,  
But could not speak, my tongue was tied.  
Then, clapping their hands, they sang and cried:  
'Now glory to God, the King o' Kings!'  
And shook their shining, rustling wings,  
Like corn that starts to shock an' tassel.  
Then something in me seemed to wrestle,  
Like a new infant seeking birth.  
I fell down flat along the earth,  
And shook. I knew that, till that hour,  
The Devil had held me in his power,  
That he fought hard to hold me now.  
Cold sweat came out upon my brow,  
I struggled, twisted, writhed, and turned,  
While all the time the angels burned,  
Like candles guttering in a gale.  
A terror came — if they should fail!  
I should be damned, beyond a doubt.  
But nary candle flickered out,  
Just went on getting brighter still,  
Each on its little separate hill,  
Where I had heaped the earth with care.  
Then, when 'twas more than I could bear,  
Sudden the torment seemed to cease.  
I felt a flooding tide o' peace,  
Like water, when the splash-head goes.
A love sprang up for all my foes.
I could sit down with them and eat —
Could even kneel an' wash their feet.
Came on me then what I must do.
I must stand in the public view
Next meeting, tell what I had seen.
I did not care to say how mean
I'd been, how I had sinned through life,
Swore, lied, got drunk, and beat my wife.
For now I knew I was forgiven
By them bright angels, come from heaven!
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