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Southern Industrial Educational Association (Inc.)

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Organized to Promote Industrial Education of the
Children of the Southern Mountains

Headquarters: Southern Building, Room 331, Washington, D. C.

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UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
28 JAN 1916

Christmas in Mountain Song.

So much have we come to associate song and carol with the Christmas season that the subject of mountain songs and ballads at Christmas would seem to be peculiarly appropriate, yet, as well as I can remember, there are only four songs in my whole collection that have any connection with Christmas. Save, indeed, for a lingering remembrance of the English "Old Christmas," which exists in a few places, and the almost forgotten belief that the farm animals bow and talk on Christmas Eve, the various beliefs, superstitions and customs that have grown about this great anniversary seem to have taken little root in the mountain country.

Several reasons for this may be suggested as possible. The early settlers, despite a strong element of German and an admixture of some other nationalities, were largely English and Scotch-Irish, who had in the main the same traditions, and who, because of numbers and native force, dominated the others. So the traditions, and songs as well, of the mountain region were derived from British sources, and we have, probably, more of the old English convivial celebration of the Christmas season than the gentle home celebration of the German, which has come to be general in our national life. Possibly the stern theology of those early pioneers may have had its influence in focusing attention on the trend of life rather than on the tender love that centers about the birth of the Christ Child. And life, too, in those early days, was hard, as it still is hard in many remote mountain sections. Also it may be remembered that in Scotland, at least, the New Year more than Christmas was formerly the season of celebration. However it may be, four songs that have survived their transplanting from the old country have references to Christmas, but in the later songs, especially those that have probably grown up in this section, there is no mention of it among those that have come under my personal observation.

Of these four songs, one, found in Kentucky, is so close to a version found in Polk County, North Carolina, and printed in "English and Scottish Popular Ballads," edited by Helen Child Sargent and George Lyman Kittredge (Cf. 79D), that only a reference to it is necessary.

A version somewhat similar to the second, sung to me by an old, old lady in north Georgia, may be found in the same volume (20 P., verses 11-22). While the substance of this ballad has little connection with the Christmas season, the mountain version begins:

"Christmas times is a-rolling on,
When the nights are long and cool."

and to one who has traveled the Southern mountain country is peculiarly suggestive of that season in that region.

It was in December that I made my first trip into the remote mountains and I recall vividly how the chill suddenly gripped us as the sun sank behind the steep hills. Darkness fell early, blotting out the tall hollies with their wealth of cheerful berries, the mistletoe high on the oaks and buttonwoods, till only the black "spruce-pines" could be distinguished towering solemnly over the other trees that skirted the creek, and above them the stars, large and brilliant. The creek itself was fringed with ice which tinkled and clinked as we forded and forded again, watching eagerly for a flickering light and the smell of wood smoke, which would give promise of the night's lodging. Christmas, indeed, marks the end of the season of "corn-huskings" and "lasses-bilings" and the beginning of bad roads and the shut-in season. As another song sung in this region has it:

"The lonesome scenes of winter contain to frost and snow,
Dark clouds around us gather and stormy winds do blow."

The third Christmas song, if it may be called such, is of a different character. It was sent to me by a gentleman, who within recent years has gone to live in the Kentucky mountains, and no more interesting account of it can be given than is found in his letter.

"This ballad was used to sing me to sleep and was sung by both of my parents, but I am quite sure that my mother learned it from my father, though my mother's grandparents on her mother's side came from * * * Cheshire, England. My father evidently learned it from his mother, who also used to sing me to sleep with it. My grandmother was * * *, daughter of * * *, of Manchester. * * * They (the grandparents) first came to Rhode Island about the year 1825, but soon went West and took up a homestead in Illinois.

I was surprised to hear * * * sing this ballad in the mountains, practically word for word as it had been taught to me. I will try to find out something of her ancestry, but can vouch for nothing more at present than that her grandparents were mountain people.

The tune or rhythm to which she sang it I noticed to be the same as that taught to me. She sang it rocking to and fro, and I have indicated the emphasis by italic and black-face letters which complete each motion of the rocker. Or better yet, if one will use a straight-backed chair instead of a rocker and make the word or portion of word underlined come alternately with the stroke of the front legs of the chair on the floor, and with the stroke of the singer's back against the back of the chair, the exact rhythm will be obvious. This will necessitate its being sung very slowly and in rather a dragging manner, but that is the way it was sung to me, and the way * * * sang it. It is evidently not intended as a military air.

My grandmother also used to sing another little verse which I have heard since but do not remember where, and which, for all I know, may be quite well known.

"O I'm so sick, and I'm so sorry,
 O what you reckon ails me;
 I dranked three quarts of buttermilk
 And then my stomick fails me."

The use of the word "reckon" here, which did not come from the South, and the quaint use of the word "fails" to make it rhyme with "ails," seems worthy of note.

I would also mention in the "Twelve Days of Christmas" that * * * said Collar Birds instead of Turtle Doves, but she said "partridge" for "partridge" as did my grandmother, and I noticed that in conversation she said "catridge" for "cartridge" as my grandmother also used to do.

"The First day of Christmas my truelove sent to me,
 A partridge in a pear tree.
 The Second day of Christmas my truelove sent to me,
 Two turtle doves and a partridge in a pear tree.
 The Third day of Christmas my truelove sent to me,
 Three French hens, two turtle doves and a partridge
 in a pear tree.

Proceeding thus by addition and repetition to the Twelfth day which is as follows (same as The House that Jack Built):

The Twelfth day of Christmas my truelove sent to me,
 Twelve bulls a roaring, eleven men a fiddling, ten
 maids a-dancing, nine hounds a-hunting, eight hares
 a-running, seven swans a-swimming, six geese a-laying,
 five gold rings, four fine canary birds, three French
 hens, two turtle doves, and a partridge in a pear tree.

You will not wonder that in my mind as a child, I had a picture of men fiddling while the maids were dancing before them. The hounds also I had pictured as nine all white short-haired dogs, all in a space about twenty feet square, in the act of running with the eight hares as cotton tail rabbits, in about the same space and about ten feet in the lead. The six geese were also pictured as in the act of laying the five gold rings. * * * It was, in fact, some

time after reading the story of the goose that layed the golden egg, in my reader, that I realized that there was anything unusual about the matter, and remember of wondering why our geese never laid gold rings, and why father did not sell them and get some that would.

I have found on trying this ballad in the rocking chair and in the straight-backed chair, that there seems to be a primary and a secondary accent occurring alternately. The greater accent always being when the chair goes back, and the lesser one when it comes forward. The chair should be rocked rather slowly, but as far back as safety would permit. I have gone over what I have written placing an additional line under the words having the greater accent, and which represent the completion of the backward motion of the chair. I have an idea that this tune, if it may be called such, is rather the child of the rocking process, though I had not thought of it as such until I came to try it."

One more of these number songs I have found in the mountains of north Georgia, and as it seems to belong to the Christmas season, it may be quoted here:

"Come and I will sing you.
 What will I sing you?
 I will sing you ONE.
 What is your ONE?
 ONE, O ONE is GOD alone
 And He shall ever remain so."

As in the former song, the verses are repeated progressively every time, until at the last we have:

"What is your TWELVE?
 TWELVE are the twelve Apostles,
 ELEVEN are the eleven who went to Heaven,
 TEN are the Ten Commandments,
 NINE are the nine that dress so fine,
 EIGHT are the great Archangels,
 SEVEN are the seven stars fixed in the sky,

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WASHINGTON, D. C.

DECEMBER, 1914

All communications relating to the QUARTERLY MAGAZINE should be addressed to the Editor, Mrs. C. David White, Room 331, Southern Building, Washington, D. C.

The Ellen Wilson Memorial.

The women of the Southern Presbyterian Church have begun a movement to create a memorial to Mrs. Wilson which will be in the nature of an endowment fund, the interest of which is to be used to provide scholarships for the Christian education of the youth of the Southern mountains.

This fund is to be gathered by a committee of women coöperating with women throughout the nation, who may be interested in mountain work. The benefits of this fund are to be applied to students of various mountain institutions without any discrimination as to denominations.

The New Honorary President.

At the desire of the Board of Trustees, Miss Margaret Wilson has accepted the position as Honorary President of the Southern Industrial Educational Association. Miss Wilson is a prominent social worker and interested in all broad movements for the enlightenment and betterment of living. Her acceptance of this new position when already she is so deeply occupied with other responsibilities, is based upon her desire to continue the work of her mother whom she succeeds and who for many years gave both sympathy and substantial support in behalf of the mountain people.

A Special Plea to the Patriotic Societies.

The Southern Industrial Educational Association makes appeal to the patriotic societies of the country, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Colonial Dames and others, for scholarships. Owing to the extraordinary conditions that prevail this year the work of the mountain schools is obliged to depend more than ever upon the generosity of the outside friends. In order to make the situation clear to our readers we quote directly from statements that the Association has received since the opening of the schools in the fall:

"There is a shadow over the school, as over all schools, caused by the great European war, and we are especially saddened by the high cost of food and the lack of markets for the cotton crop, but we are going to make the best of it and do what we can."

"We send our graduates back to their homes and communities fitted for fatherhood and motherhood—good citizenship. Now we face want. Boys and girls come to us to be taught how to live. For lack of money we are compelled to turn them away. Fifty dollars will enable us to keep one student for a year."

"The year which stretches before us seems very long when I face the terrible financial problems. This year I beg for daily bread only for these children of the hills and the faithful teachers."

More of these appeals could be given were it necessary to further impress upon our readers the needs of the mountain workers. Ten contributors of one dollar each will provide for one day scholarship, or five at ten dollars each will give a fifty-dollar scholarship for a year. We are grateful to the many small chapters of the D. A. R. who have sent us their ten-dollar contributions, and we urge others to make similar gifts. No sum is too small to help in the work.

Mrs. Gielow Obligated to Rest.

Owing to continued ill-health Mrs. Gielow, the Founder and Vice-President of the Association, is unable to assume any active work in the cause which she has so much at heart, and is still absent from the city.

During her period of enforced rest it is a cause of much satisfaction to her that she awakened the interest of Mrs. Russell Sage by means of her story entitled "Uncle Sam," also that by her presentation to Mrs. Wilson of the urgent need of a Field Secretary, the First Lady of the Land was able to secure the cooperation of Mr. Cleveland H. Dodge, whereby funds for the services of such an officer were guaranteed for three years.

Two of the Auxiliaries, those of Baltimore and Philadelphia, have had very successful sales this fall and have thus greatly enlarged the knowledge of the outside world regarding the survival of the old industries that once were common throughout the land but which elsewhere passed into disuse when machinery and factories took these industries away from the home. Substantial results came from these two enterprises and we are glad to express the thanks of the Association for this encouraging cooperation in its work.

The sixth annual Bazaar held in November proved a great success, both as to the quality of the articles sent in by mountain workers and the enlistment of interest from many who had not heretofore known of the work of the Association and the exchange which it maintains. Several schools and mountain weavers were represented for the first time, and in beauty of design and excellence of workmanship the bed-spreads and coverlets have never been surpassed. Over four hundred dollars were sent back to the mountains, to make glad the lives of some of the women who have no other opportunity of bringing their handiwork to the attention of the outside world.

In accordance with the gracious custom established by Mrs. Wilson, flowers in generous quantities were sent over from the White House conservatories. Mr. Thyson, the manager of the Southern Building, kindly gave the Association the use of two vacant rooms, so that it was possible to make a much more extensive exhibit than has been done heretofore. Most of the beautiful bed-spreads were bought by people who are fitting up colonial bedrooms.

Hookworm in the Mountains.

Since the discovery that the hookworm had wrought sad havoc in the mountain as well as valley regions of the South, physicians have been sent into many remote regions through the united efforts of State Boards of Health and the Rockefeller Commission for eradication of the hookworm, and to many people has been given a new joy in life, through health such as they had never before known. The Commission has not waited for the people to come to city or town for treatment, but has carried this wonderful aid to them. In many cases, where mountaineers have not made good citizens or efficient tillers of the soil, it has been because in reality they were ill with hookworm anemia. In the same way, workers in cotton mills whose stupid, lazy condition was supposed to be due to inhalations of lint were found to be suffering from this same disease. This health campaign therefore will be very far-reaching in solving numbers of problems affecting the welfare of the South.—*Home Mission Monthly*.

Practical instruction in farming is one of the most vital needs of the mountaineer. Dr. S. C. Mitchell, of the University of South Carolina, has said that "poor land makes a poor home, a poor school, a poor church, and a poor civilization. Like land, like man."—*Home Mission Monthly*.

Scotch-Irish Characteristics.

The outstanding trait of the Scotch-Irish was *will*. No other element was so masterful and contentious. In a petition directed against their immigration, the Quakers characterized them as a "pernicious and pugnacious people" who "absolutely want to control the provinces themselves." The stubbornness of their character is probably responsible for the unexampled losses in the battles of our Civil War. They fought the Indian, fought the British with great unanimity in two wars, and were in the front rank in the conquest of the West. More than any other stock has this tough, gritty breed, so lacking in poetry and sensibility, molded our national character. If today a losing college crew rows so hard that they have to be lifted from their shell at the end of the boat race, it is because of the never-say-die Scotch-Irish fighters and pioneers have been the picturesque and glowing figures in the imagination of American youth.

In eminence, the lead of the Scotch-Irish has been in government, exploration, and war, although they have not been lacking in contributors to education and invention. In art and music they have had little to offer.—*Prof. E. A. Ross.*

There are still on hand some of the post cards giving two views of the President's bedroom which was fitted up last year with mountain weavings. These are sold for the benefit of the work at two for five cents. The price of Mrs. Gielow's successful little story entitled "Old Andy the Moonshiner" has been reduced to twenty-five cents and five cents for postage.

Christmas in Mountain Song.

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SIX are the cheerful waiters,
 FIVE are the farmers in a boat,
 FOUR are the Gospel preachers,
 THREE of them are strangers,
 TWO, O, two are the lily white babes, clothed in darling
 green, O
 ONE, O one is GOD alone, and He shall ever re-
 main so."

A suggestive, explanatory account of this "Carol of the Twelve Numbers" may be found in the *Journal of American Folklore*, July-September, 1891, the important differences existing between this version and the one quoted there being:

"NINE is the moonshine bright and clear"
 and

"FIVE is the ferryman in the boat."

Another version, obtained from an old lady living in Washington, D. C., but of New England and Mayflower ancestry, is interesting to compare:

"Now, I'll sing, O what shall I sing?

O, I'll sing TWELVE.

TWELVE disciples,

ELEVEN apostles,

TEN Commandments,

NINE unbelievers,

EIGHT captain angels,

SEVEN sennets in the sky,

SIX single weavers,

FIVE fingers on the bowl,

FOUR gospel teachers,

THREE are thrivers,

TWO and two are under brides, sitting on the green row,

ONE and one are all alone, never more to be so."

It is quite possible that among the collections that have

been made of mountain songs and ballads, other references to Christmas and other carols may be found. The study of the folklore and folk-songs of these mountains is a large one, and one that promises results of great interest. It is to be hoped that all who are teaching or in touch with the mountains, more especially with the remote sections, will make every attempt to preserve the songs, games, beliefs, superstitions and legends that still exist there, but which are disappearing with the death of the older people.* Objects, often, of indifference or curiosity, they are of real importance and will be increasingly so as we come to be interested in all that pertains to the history and development of our own race.

Mrs. JOHN C. CAMPBELL.

Distress at Hindman!

From the school at Hindman, Kentucky, in which many of our readers have a personal interest, comes the distressing news of a serious outbreak of typhoid fever. At last accounts there were forty-six cases in the school and some outside. Among the victims are Miss May Stone and six of the workers. A member of the Federal Public Health Service has gone to investigate conditions and discover the cause of the outbreak.

Contributions of money are earnestly sought, as the school is not financially able to pay for the imperative services of trained nurses or the special food necessary for so many cases that must be carefully nursed through convalescence.

*At the second annual Southern Mountain Worker's Conference, held in Knoxville in April, 1914, a committee was appointed to encourage the collection of ballads in the mountains, and the establishment of ballad societies at mountain centers. The members of the Committee were: Mrs. John C. Campbell, Chairman, Box 116, Asheville, North Carolina; Miss Ethel de Long, Pine Mountain, Kentucky; and Miss Isabel N. Rawn, Martha Berry School, Mt. Berry, Georgia. Any mountain ballad contributions will be gladly received by the Committee, who will also answer as far as possible any queries.