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OF THE

Southern Industrial Educational Association

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Southern Industrial Educational Association (Inc.)

(NON-SECTARIAN)

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

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Balladry in the Southern Appalachians.

EXTRACTS FROM WILLIAM ASPINWALL BRADLEY'S "SONG
BALLET AND DEVIL'S DITTIES."*

Many survivals of old Scottish ballads which, brought to this country three centuries ago by the early settlers, were carried by their children into the wilderness, are still sung by their children's children, though without any knowledge of their ancient origin. And it is these, above all, that are treasure-trove to the ballad-lover who visits the Southern highlands.

"It was not until I read a volume of early English ballads," said a mountain woman who had received a better education and lived a life less shut in than the majority of her sisters, "that I had any idea what the songs really were that we used to sing here in the hills when we were children."

She was an interesting and intelligent young woman, who as Circuit Court stenographer, was accustomed to take down all the evidence in the vernacular—not because she could not talk and write conventional "Book" English as well as another, but because she appreciated the fine, full flavor of this racy rustic idiom which conserves so many quaint characteristics from the speech of Shakespeare's, and even Chaucer's, contemporaries.

She remembers how her mother, at work in the "cook-house" or corn-field, or "tromping the treadles of her loom" installed in the covered porch or the great loft, weaving many a web of white or colored linsey for the family raiment, would sing, and teach her children to sing after her, such homely songs as "The Salt Sea," "Pretty Polly," "Little Hugh," "Barbara Allen," "The Brown Girl," "The Turkish Lady," or "Lord Thomas and Fair Ellender."

Imagine, therefore, how naively great was her surprise on

*Harper's Magazine, May, 1915.

discovering that the "song-ballets" of her youth, which in her later sophistication she had come somewhat to despise and even deplore, as at once silly and sanguinary, were the recognized ballads of "real literature"!

Another mountain woman who had both studied and taught in Eastern colleges, told me that when she informed a well-known authority on the subject of ballad literature what she herself had heard in the hills about her own home, he at first utterly refused to credit her. And this is not strange, for certainly few discoveries in our time have been more remarkable—more thrilling, even—than that these old poems, which had been received as a precious heritage from an utterly vanished past, still lived on the lips of men and women of our own land.

It was like bringing a dead literature back to life again. All at once the centuries seemed to fall away, and the romance of a primitive people that had until then been largely limited to picturesque incidents of feud warfare and the illicit distilling of "corn licker," became heightened and enhanced with a new and richer note. Wandering through the mountains, one now knew he might at any time meet a company of Robin Hood's men encamped in some sequestered cove; or, in the bronze beech-woods at the head of some lonely branch, meet fair Ellender as, mounted upon her palfrey, she rode through forest and town to attend the wedding of her faithless lover.

Of all these old ballads, the one most commonly encountered is "Barbara Allen's Cruelty." This is mentioned both by Samuel Pepys in his Diary and by Oliver Goldsmith, who wrote of it in his third Essay:

"The music of the finest singer is dissonance to what I felt when our old dairy-maid sung me into tears with 'Johnny Armstrong's Last Good-Night,' or 'The Cruelty of Barbara Allen.'" And certainly no one who has ever heard this old song sung by women "battling" their clothes before lonely cabins, or by flatboatmen under the blazing sun on

the forks of the Kentucky River, can ever forget the profound impression of almost magic melancholy it produces.

It has truthfully been said that the air is the life of a ballad, and those who have only read these old songs, and have not heard them sung to their appropriate airs, can have only a limited idea of their true artistic effect. These airs are as traditional as the words, and may be found in the collections of Chappell and other musical antiquaries. They are all a good deal alike, so that on first acquaintance it is not always easy to tell them apart. But although they are for the most part mournful and melancholy, and thus lend themselves to the weird wailing of the mountain minstrel—for whom a ballad is "pretty" in proportion to the poignancy of the emotional effect it produces—there is a certain haunting appeal in these simple and monotonous old-time melodies. They are sung slowly and in as high-pitched a voice as possible; and, as one listens to the peculiar nasal insistence on certain notes, the strange slides, quaint quavers, and affecting falsetto breaks, he can not help thinking of Chaucer's nun who sang the "servyce dyvyne,"

Entuned in hir nose ful semely.

The singer frequently accompanies himself on banjo, fiddle or dulcimer, or "dulcimore," as it is called in the mountain vernacular. This last is the traditional instrument of mountain music.

Alas, not only the dulcimer, but the ballad itself, is now beginning to disappear from the mountains. After finding a refuge here when it had been all but forgotten by the rest of the world, it is at last being uprooted and cast aside as a thing of small value.

"In another generation or two," writes Professor Shearin, "they will be but a memory in the Kentucky highlands; the clank of the colliery, the rattle of the locomotive, the roar of the blast-furnace, the shriek of the factory whistle, and, alas, even the music of the school-bell, are already overwhelming the thin tones of the dulcimer and the quavering

voice of the Last Minstrel of the Cumberlands, who can find scant heart to sing again the lays of olden years across the seas."

"Give us your culture, but leave us our civilization!" exclaimed a thoughtful mountain man at a conference of mountain workers held not long ago at Burns' school in Clay County.

He might have reversed it. For the mountain people have their primitive culture as well as their primitive civilization. And who shall say that the root of this mountain culture, whose flower is pride, courtesy, and a noble bearing, does not lie in these old ballads which have for so many generations shaped their imagination, rendered their speech expressive, and helped to impart to each of their acts, however humble or homely, that sense of style which, more than anything else, even in what is evil and sinister, accounts for the romantic appeal made by these rude mountaineers?

Literature from the Bureau of Education.

Those of our readers who are interested in the Ballad Literature of the mountains will be glad to see the bulletin published by the United States Bureau of Education entitled "An Opportunity to Help in an Important Work," Nov., 1913. It contains an article by Prof. C. Alphonso Smith, of the University of Virginia, the titles in alphabetical order of the 305 English and Scotch ballads collected and numbered by Prof. Child, and a request that those readers finding any of these old ballads in circulation in their county or State report such to the Commissioner of Education.

Another bulletin (No. 11, 1915) recently published by the Bureau of Education has a bearing upon the mountain problems and may be of value to some of the readers of the QUARTERLY. It is entitled "A Statistical Study of the Public

Schools of the Southern Appalachian Mountains," and is the result of a long period of careful research by Norman Frost, the son of President Frost of Berea, whose training and experience have made him particularly fitted for the conduct of such an investigation.

Among the mountain workers who have visited the office recently have been: Rev. Wm. G. Frost and Mrs. Frost, of Berea; Dr. John C. Campbell, of the Russell Sage Foundation; Miss Mary H. Large, who has been teaching weaving in the schools and mountain homes in the region of Tryon, North Carolina; Professor J. G. Austin, President of Magoffin Institute, Kentucky; Miss Helen V. Rue and Miss Ruth Huntington, from Hindman, Kentucky, and Rev. J. P. Hall, of Plumtree, North Carolina.

"The Ellen Wilson Fund for the Christian Education of Mountain Youth" is the title of the beautiful memorial which the women of the South have created for the purpose of maintaining a line of work in which Mrs. Wilson was very greatly interested. As explained in an article by William T. Ellis in the July number of the Ladies' Home Journal, the object of this memorial is "to create, by gifts, small and great, from the American people who desire to honor the memory of this noble woman, a permanent endowment, the income from which shall be used always for the education, in some one of the schools already existing in the Southern mountains, of girls and boys who would not otherwise have an opportunity for the larger life and patriotism which Christian education represents."

Only those who have worked upon the mountain problem can realize how far-reaching will be the results of this wise plan for opening the door to those who are pleading for a chance to gain a practical education.

Quarterly Magazine

OF THE

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WASHINGTON, D. C.

JUNE, 1915

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

A Practical Proposition.

SETH SHEPARD.

Many members of our auxiliary associations have inquired if there is any special line of work in which we would wish their co-operation and aid. For this reason the Association is impelled to lay the following situation before you and solicit your interest and aid.

Dr. John C. Campbell, Secretary of the Russell Sage Foundation for the Highland Division, has made some recommendations for our consideration. Among these is one that we heartily approve. This is that we employ a domestic science and household economics expert to be sent to some school in the mountains which is engaged in the kind of work of which we approve. The chief duty of this expert would be to work out with those in charge of the school a thorough system of training adapted to the needs of the school and the surrounding mountain country. It is to be understood by both the authorities and the expert that though she is stationed at the school to help work out suitable domestic science and household economics curriculums and programme of neighborhood work, she, herself, is yet to be an extension teacher for the community and to keep in close touch with public school teachers, and with their co-operation to introduce as much as practicable of her working into the

common schools within her territory but not too great to make her work ineffective.

The school would be asked to guarantee living expenses of the expert and our charge would be her salary and necessary expenses in visiting other schools in her territory. She would be expected to keep in close touch with the county superintendents of education, and the State Department of Education, and the Bureau of Education at Washington.

When the work of the expert at the first station seems to be done she would be moved to another school or center and do the same kind of work there, retaining, however, her supervision of the former station if practicable.

Such a teacher should be very intelligent and well trained, and it is thought that such a person can be procured for a reasonable salary. We are in need of funds sufficient to justify us in this undertaking, and if our helping associations and contributors, who have done so much for us in the past, will kindly aid us in providing the necessary funds, we feel sure that we can find such an expert and that her services will be of the greatest benefit.

The headquarters of the Association in Washington will be closed from the first of July until the end of September, but its activities will not cease, as the work of awakening interest on behalf of the mountain people will be kept up as usual. The demand for the articles of mountain workmanship is steadily growing and each year an increasing number of tea houses and gift shops at the seashore and in the mountains make requests for consignments of baskets, blue and white weavings, the knotted and tufted white coverlets, feather fans, rugs, and hearth brooms. All this is very gratifying as showing appreciation for the artistic and useful articles of mountain craftsmanship.

Barbara Allen.

Many of our readers have expressed a desire to read "Barbara Allen," which is perhaps the most popular of all the mountain ballads. The version here printed is the one found by Miss Pettit in the mountains of Kentucky.

Late in the season of the year,
When the yellow leaves were falling,
Young James Graham from the west country
Fell in love with Barbara Allen.

She was a fair and comely maid,
She soar'd to his dwelling,
Which caused him to admire the more
The beauty of Barbara Allen.

It was on a bright day in June,
The buds they were swelling,
This young man he took sick,
And sent for Barbara Allen.

So slowly, slowly she got up,
And slowly she walked to him;
She slightly drew the curtains by:
"Young man, I think you're dying."

"O yes, I'm sick, I'm very sick,
My heart is almost breaking;
But a kiss or two from your sweet lips
Will cure me, Barbara Allen."

"O don't you remember in yonders town,
In yonders town, a-drinking,
You drank your health to the ladies around,
And slighted Barbara Allen?"

"Yes, I remember in yonders town,
In yonders town a-drinking,
I drank my health to the ladies around,
And slighted Barbara Allen."

He turned his pale face to the wall,
His back was turned upon her;
He called to his friends and neighbors around,
"Be kind to Barbara Allen."

So slowly, slowly she got up,
And slowly she walked from him;
She thought she could hear her own heart say,
"Go back there, Barbara Allen."

She had not got three miles from town,
Till she heard the death-bell ringing,
And every ring in it seemed to say
"Hard-hearted Barbara Allen!"

She looked to the east, and she looked to the west,
She saw his pale corpse coming;
"Go l[a]y ye down that lovely corpse,
And let me look upon him."

The more she looked, was the more she grieved;
She burst out a-crying,
Saying, "Take me away, O take me away,
For I am now a-dying."

"Cursed be my name," says she,
"And cursed be my nature,
That I might have saved this young man's life
By doing my endeavor!"

"O mother, go and fix my bed,
Go fix it long and narrow;
Young James has died for me today;
I'll die for him tomorrow."

Young James was buried in the high churchyard,
Barbara Allen was buried in the higher;
And out of young James' grave sprang a rose,
And out of Barbara Allen's a briar.

And they grew and grew to the high church top;
They could not grow no higher;
They lapped and twined in a true lover's knot,
And the rose outgrew the briar.

Census Facts Regarding Illiteracy.

According to the Federal Census of 1910 there were 5,516,163 persons 10 years of age and over unable to read and write, and millions more but little above the line of total illiteracy. Of 2,273,603 illiterate males, 21 years of age and over, 617,733 were native-born whites, 788,631 foreign-born whites, and 819,135 negroes.

The number of the native-born white illiterate voters per thousand in the different States is shown by the following table published by the Bureau of Education.

It will be noted that the eleven States showing the greatest number of illiterates per thousand include all of the Southern Appalachian Mountain States, and it is particularly to be borne in mind that among the native-born white population these illiterate persons are predominantly in the mountain districts. These facts are a powerful argument in favor of such agencies as the Southern Industrial Educational Association and all others which are striving to lift the cloud of ignorance and incompetence that hangs over the mountain people.

There are many reasons for this condition of illiteracy in the mountains. One is the lack of any adequate public school system due to the fact that sparse population and low valuation of property render it impossible for many of the mountain counties to contribute their quota towards the maintenance of public schools. In some of the States there is no compulsory school law and no local taxation for school purposes.

Number of Illiterates Per Thousand of the Native-Born White Male Population 21 Years of Age and Over in 1910:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Washington—3. | 26. Michigan—17. |
| 2. Montana—4. | 27. Ohio—20. |
| 3. Idaho—4. | 28. Indiana—28. |
| 4. Wyoming—4. | 29. Maine—28. |
| 5. Nevada—4. | 30. Vermont—29. |
| 6. Oregon—5. | 31. Arizona—33. |
| 7. Utah—5. | 32. Maryland—34. |
| 8. North Dakota—5. | 33. Missouri—38. |
| 9. South Dakota—5. | 34. Oklahoma—40. |
| 10. California—6. | 35. Delaware—40. |
| 11. District of Columbia—6. | 36. Texas—43. |
| 12. Massachusetts—7. | 37. Florida—49. |
| 13. Minnesota—7. | 38. Mississippi—60. |
| 14. Nebraska—8. | 39. West Virginia—75. |
| 15. Connecticut—9. | 40. Arkansas—75. |
| 16. New York—11. | 41. Georgia—87. |
| 17. Iowa—11. | 42. Virginia—97. |
| 18. Kansas—11. | 43. Alabama—106. |
| 19. New Jersey—12. | 44. South Carolina—108. |
| 20. Wisconsin—13. | 45. Tennessee—113. |
| 21. Colorado—15. | 46. New Mexico—114. |
| 22. Rhode Island—15. | 47. Kentucky—119. |
| 23. Pennsylvania—16. | 48. Louisiana—136. |
| 24. New Hampshire—16. | 49. North Carolina—140. |
| 25. Illinois—17. | |

It is gratifying to report to the readers of the QUARTERLY concerning the splendid progress of the school at Gatlinburg, Tennessee, established in February, 1912, by the Pi Beta Phi Fraternity. This school, though not in any way connected with the Association, was established through its influence and in many ways is carrying out its ideals and purposes. The school has encouraged the people of the mountains to do their part in co-operating with the new agency from the outside, and as a result they gave thirty-five acres of their choicest land for school purposes. This year the Sevier County School Board voted to give the Pi Phi School the entire district appropriation of \$375.00, as it is the only school in the district.

During the month of April the third annual meeting of the Southern Mountain Workers' Conference was held at Knoxville, Tenn., with representatives from over a hundred different schools and institutions in attendance. The purpose of this conference is to promote acquaintance among those engaged in work in the Southern Highland region and through exchange of ideas to further the best methods of work. Among those present were such leaders in mountain work as Dr. John C. Campbell, of the Russell Sage Foundation; President Frost, of Berea, and Dr. P. P. Claxton, Commissioner of Education.

From the East Side of New York City, to the Pacific Coast, there is not a more interesting or more promising part of our population, or one that is more in need of friendly aid in an educational way than the people of the Southern Highlands. They need every sort of training—tilling of the soil, industry, education in the humblest occupations of the home, in everything that goes to make up a useful life.

JUSTICE HUGHES.