

"BLUE MOUNTAIN LAKE"

AND "BARBARA ALLEN"

By HELEN HARTNESS FLANDERS

NEEDLESS to say, there are no boundaries for folk songs. If some have spilled over the State line into New England laps, we take this chance to return two of them.

The first of these songs, "Blue Mountain Lake," is usually called "The Belle of Long Lake," and I have told in *The New Green Mountain Songster* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939) how I stalked other versions of the song and its story. In attempting to run down the actual facts of the fight narrated therein, I have tried in vain to locate a book by a pastor of Long Lake, called *The History of Long Lake, New York*. For the time being I've had to accept what singers could tell me about the fight there in the lumber camp. These accounts are probably as satisfactory as a historical record would be, for lumbermen usually chose a song as the way to pass along among themselves something they remembered with pleasure as having broken the monotony and hard work of their days in the big woods. In "Guy Reed" or "Peter Emberly" or "The Jam on Jerry's Rock," the singer gives the impression of having witnessed the tragedy.

Ballad collecting is one long-continued story. My first recording of this song was from a man who lumbered around Long Lake and gave the name of the boss as "Griffith." Next, a Glens Falls singer named the boss "Mitchell." The third time we came upon the "Belle of Long Lake," the singer said, "This song is about Richard Canfield." In the following version the name is Mitchell

BLUE MOUNTAIN LAKE

Canfield. It was collected from Mrs. Lena Bourne Fish, late of East Jaffrey, New Hampshire, on May 9, 1940, by Miss Marguerite Olney, my assistant at Middlebury College. Mrs. Fish's father had been a lumber buyer in the Adirondacks.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Readers may be interested in comparing this version with those in Mrs. Flanders' *The New Green Mountain Songster*, p. 174; Carl Carmer, *The Hudson* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1939), p. 372 f., and H. W. Thompson, *Body, Boots and Britches* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1940), p. 267.]

Flanders Ballad Collection, Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont. D-80A.

VAR. A

When the God of all wis—dom fash-ioned our land The

beau-ty of nat - ure he did un - der - stand, The

choic-est of them in hand he did take And fash-ioned the re-gion of

Blue Moun-tain Lake. Der-ry down, down down, der-ry — down.

VAR. A

Moun — tains in their grand-eur, etc.

BLUE MOUNTAIN LAKE

When the God of all wisdom fashioned our land,
 The beauty of nature he did understand;
 The choicest of them in hand he did take,
 And fashioned the region of Blue Mountain Lake.
 Derry down, down, down, derry down.

Mountains in their grandeur round this Eden rise;
 The pines wave their branches and point to the skies.
 Disease is not cured by potion or pills;
 The strength of our God is the strength of the hills.
 Derry down, down, down, derry down.

At last the bright, happy New Year it did come.
 The boys had some whisky, and planned to have fun.
 Some played the fiddle, and some danced and sang
 Till the walls of the shanty with their music rang.
 Derry down, down, down, derry down.

Now Mitchell Canfield who kept the shanty
 Was the meanest damn crank that you ever did see;
 He'd hang round the shanty all day, and at night,
 If a man said a word, he was ready to fight.
 Derry down, down, down, derry down.

At the stroke of eleven, brave Mitchell did say,
 "We have had enough racket, I'm sure, for one day,
 And besides, I have quite a pain in my head,
 So put up your fiddles and go straight to bed."
 Derry down, down, down, derry down.

Up spoke Patsy McDonough, the boss of the gang;
 He could cut down the logs as he whistled and sang;
 "To command me to silence any man I defy."
 In his voice there was courage, and red in his eye.
 Derry down, down, down, derry down.

Mitchell then attempted to put Patsy out,
 But Pat with his fist did soon put him to rout;
 His wife standing near, if the truth I would tell,
 She was tickled to death to see Mitchell get hell.
 Derry down, down, down, derry down.

So they kept up the racket, the noise and the din,
 Till the bright happy New Year they did usher in;
 Canfield is a much different man, it is said,
 And is troubled no more with a pain in his head.
 Derry down, down, down, derry down.

A lumberman's life is the best life of all,
 With the boys ever ready to serve at your call;
 There seems to be health in each breath that I take.
 I will die and be buried near Blue Mountain Lake.
 Derry down, down, down, derry down.

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The version of "Barbara Allen" which follows was sent to the Helen Hartness Flanders Collection in the Middlebury College Library by a Vermont singer now living in New York State, Mr. Adam Johnson of Mooer's Forks, New York.

This version has a number of claims upon our interest. In the first place, Barbara's remorse comes later than usual. There is a noticeable lack of ballad clichés. Two interesting and unusual motifs are the watch and chain, and "basin with his true heart's blood."

BARBARA ALLEN

(Child 84)

It was early, early in the month of May,
 When the trees were ripe and yellow,
 That a young man lay a-dying on his bed,
 For the love of Barbara Allen.
(Repeat last two lines after each verse.)

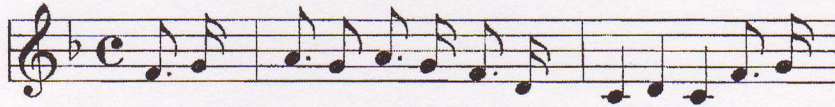
Then quickly, quickly she came to him
 At the place where he was dwelling,
 And said, as she drew the curtains aside,
 "Poor boy, I am sorry you are dying."

"Not dying yet, not dying yet;
One kiss from you will save me."

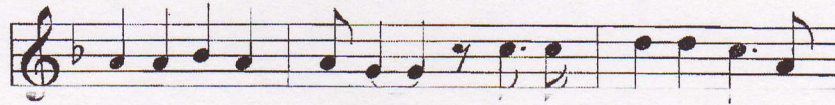
"One kiss from me you never shall receive,
While on your death-bed lying.

"Do you remember last Saturday night,
When in the ale-house drinking —
You drank your health to all the pretty maids,
And you slighted me, Barbara Allen?"

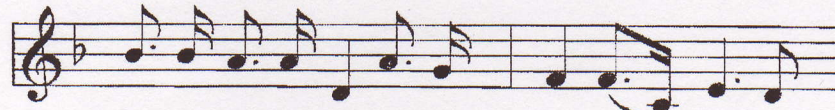
Flanders Ballad Collection, Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont. C-143-1.



It was ear - ly, ear ly in the month of May When the



trees were ripe and yel - low, That a young man lay a—



dy - ing on his bed for the love of Barb'ry



Al - len That a young man lay a—



dying on his bed for the love of Barb'ry Al—len —.

"Yes, I remember last Saturday night
While in the ale-house drinking;
I drank my health to all the pretty maids
And I slighted you, Barbara Allen.

"Look down, look down at the foot of my bed;
There you'll see a napkin lying,
And in it wrapped my gold watch and chain,
Which I leave to you, Barbara Allen.

"Look up, look up to the head of my bed;
There you'll see a basin setting,
And in it is poured my heart's pure blood,
Which I shed for you, Barbara Allen."

As she was going from the room,
She turned and said unto him,
"I cannot keep you from your doom.
Farewell," said Barbara Allen.

He turned his face unto the wall,
As deadly pangs he fell in;
"Adieu! Adieu! Adieu to you all!
Adieu to Barbara Allen."

As she was walking o'er the fields,
She heard the bell a-knellin'
And every stroke did seem to say,
"Unworthy Barbara Allen."

She turned her body around about
And spied the corpse a-comin'.
"Lay down, lay down the corpse," she said,
"That I may look upon him."

With scornful eye she looked down,
Her cheeks with laughter swellin',
Whilst all her friends cried out amain,
"Unworthy Barbara Allen."

When he was dead and laid in grave,
Her heart was struck with sorrow;
"O mother, mother, make my bed
For I shall die tomorrow.

"Hard-hearted creature, him to slight
Who loved me, O so dearly!
Oh, had I been more kind to him
When he was alive and near me!"

She on her death-bed as she lay
Begged to be buried by him,
And sore repented of the day
That she did e'er deny him.

"Farewell," she said, "ye virgins all,
And shun the fault I fell in;
Henceforth take warning by the fall
Of cruel Barbara Allen."

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