

## Old Songs.

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There is always a feeling of sadness which clings to a volume of old songs. The limp and faded leaves, and the worn and ragged edges are filled with memories of other days. Even though we may prize the old book and treasure the faint remembrance it possesses of others in days gone by the real spirit of the music may have fled.

Should we try to sing and play those songs as others had done the same satisfaction would not be realized.

The tunes our mothers sang us when we were rocked in the cradle and those we ourselves sang when we played at keeping house and sailor boy, now sound to us rather tame. Why? Is it that other and more cultivated tastes has left these

old songs as memories of the past? Not entirely. I think some of these ancient melodies and their words are as stirring and sympathetic as though they had been written but yesterday. Such fine old strains as "Coming thro' the Rye", "Home, Sweet Home", or "Auld Lang Syne", will always find a place in the hearts of Americans, and will continue to live so long as we are a patriotic people. It is always pleasant to know something of the origin of a song, and to know some incident connected with its maker, even though the song itself be most forgotten and its composer dead. And when we come to hunt out the events or circumstances that inspired the writing of a song or its music we find some curious facts and amusing incidents.

The "Old Taken Bucket", and the "Sword of Bunker Hill" were once considered matchless songs but <sup>now</sup> are seldom used; unless it

be for the good thoughts which they contain and their memories of older days.

In connection with these two may be mentioned the one called "Woodman, spare that Tree". It was once a favorite song.

Morris wrote the words, and Henry Russell set them to music.

To Henry Russell is given the credit of making a number of songs very popular but of little merit. His "Cheer, Boys, Cheer", "The Slave Girl", and many others were sung in both classes of society.

There is a song that, when sung to-day is sure to be a general favorite, yet a century ago "Sally in our Alley", was thought almost peerless. Even the polite Addison loved this song.

"She wore a wreath of Roses" is rather of a sad turn but when given to the right voice it ranks quite high. The "Ivy Green", whose

words were written by Sickins gives one a thought of the woods and perhaps a feeling of melancholy. It is said that many years ago that song was highly popular, but like many others it is slowly disappearing.

"Coming thro' the Rye" is a song which has always been popular and probably will always be one which will ever be welcome. Doubtless all have heard it, but few are aware of the fact that the "Rye" of the song is the river of that name, and not a field of grain. Two songs of the sea which are long forgotten but which we may recall with pleasure are "Oen Bolt", and "Poor Jack".

"The Minute Gun at Sea", "Landboard Watch", and a "Life on the Ocean Wave", are sung yet with enthusiasm; the others never. There are two songs of the sea, however, that are as soul stirring and dramatic to day as they were when first penned—

"The Three Fishers" and "The Sands of Dee", the words of both were written by Kingsley, the music of the first by Kullah, and that of the second by Scott. "Rocked in the cradle of the Deep", is also a fine sea song.

Knight was the master musician and his style alone shows the grandeur of the subject, while Emma Willard wrote the words. There is a dear old ballad that has been popular for two centuries and we hope it still will continue to be. I refer to "Barbara Allen" which was first sung in 1665. The music and words are both very ancient.

Political songs are probably more quickly forgotten than any other class. What a world of good they have accomplished! The two that have been most helpful are "John Brown", and "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too". They have cheered more than one fainting soldier. "Maryland, my Maryland" is not so popular now as it was years ago.

Some songs have been written and sung for only a short time, while others have taken a place in the hearts of the people and are sure to live.

"Yankee Doodle," for instance, is a slow and droll but very ridiculous song. It has done duty in a variety of causes. In the time of Charles I. it was sung to children by their nurses; in the civil war cavaliers hummed the air; and in 1755 it drifted to America and helped to increase the patriotic feelings of each soldier. When we hear the "Star-Spangled Banner" we readily discern the difference in patriotic feeling between it and "Yankee Doodle." The "Star-Spangled Banner" was born on the battle field and for that reason will always have a <sup>national</sup> home in the hearts of the people as the song.

The music to which the words were written by their author, is an old French air and one peculiarity about the tune is that it is a very trying one to sing. It has a compass of more than an octave and a half, and in any other key than the one in which it is written (B flat) would be entirely out of the range of an ordinary voice.

The "Marseillaise" was written and the music composed for it in a single night, and in a very short time it became the national song of France. "Rule Britannia" has been described as the best national air ever written. There is something about it that is very expressive.

There will probably always be a doubt as to just who wrote the words of "God Save the King", or who composed the music.

The history of our own "Hail Columbia" has a very sure foundation. The words breathe a purely American patriotism and its sentiments and feelings respond to every true American.

Of sacred song its words and music speak for itself. The poets of the early church left behind them many impressive melodies. May they ever live, to keep in the minds of the people all that is noble, pure, and true. Of the influence which song has had upon the current of a nation's progress there needs no confirmation. It has always been noble and good.

Lottie J. Short.