

The Song Hunters

No. 2 LUCY BROADWOOD

by FRANK HOWES



I HAVE JUST COME upon a letter to me from Lucy Broadwood, dated March 23, 1928, i.e. soon after I took over from her the editorship of the *Folk Song Journal*. It begins, after a preliminary acknowledgment of one from me, "I have just come back from the soloists' morning rehearsal of the 'St. John' Passion parts. As J. S. B. always goes straight to my head, and it takes a long time for me to become sober again, please forgive if I am incoherent." So speaks our scholar, who hardly sounds like the drier type of academic. Needless to say she is not at all incoherent but goes on to tell me of instances of tunes spread over Europe, which Dr. Walter Wiora might have put into his latest (1966) anthology, in which by means of tables of tunes arranged one above the other he essays to prove the internationality of folk-songs on the ground that the argument for their nationality, their being essentially national products, has had a long enough innings. "There is a great mass of stuff" she goes on "that is not older than mediaeval of which we find versions all over Europe; many of the things such as children's ring-games dances and songs have very close resemblances; narrative ballads ('breathing the 14th century' as a journalist would say), stories of the Boccaccio sort, and various forms of art must have been passed from one country to another by travellers", notably by pilgrims. It was a background knowledge of the "great mass of stuff" that illumined her annotations of the folk-songs in the *Journal*, which she edited from 1904 to 1909 and from 1916 to 1926.

Lucy Broadwood was one of those maiden aunts of independent means who in late Victorian times accomplished so much work of social value in many fields of activity. But Aunt Lucy, as my friend

Captain Evelyn Broadwood calls her, was also a niece, the niece of that Reverend John who really started the movement back in 1843 with the publication of a little book of Sussex songs. The family descended from a cabinet maker from the Border country who joined Tschudi, the Swiss instrument maker in London, and who did the right thing by marrying the boss's daughter and so inherited the firm, which still makes pianos. The family was musical and Lucy herself played and sang and had enough harmony to write simple but apt accompaniments for the songs in *English Traditional Songs and Carols*, which she published in 1908. But long before that she had established herself as lover, collector and scholar of English folk-song in that epoch-marking book *English County Songs*, which with J. A. Fuller Maitland she had published exactly fifty years after her Uncle John's book. For this too she provided accompaniment and annotation. And here I have, as they say, to declare my interest: I followed her as editor of the *Journal* and I followed at one remove Fuller Maitland as Music Critic of *The Times*. So I have rather a special interest in her and him and folk-song.

As a collector she had the necessary musicianship and she had the necessary fellow-feeling with the country people from whom she collected, first of all in Surrey and Sussex and later in the Highlands, for she was a country woman, although at the short time I knew her—alas! not very well, though to be sure she gave me a wedding present—she lived in Chelsea. Her distinctive contributions to our movement were her scholarship and her editorial ethics. The earlier collectors in Scotland and Ireland were lax by present standards: they rewrote words and 'corrected' tunes. If you want to get

The Sussex Mummers' Christmas Carol

^F ^{C7} ^F ^{B^b}
 *1. When right - eous Jo - seph wed - ded was Un - to a ⁺vir - tuous
^F ^{B^b} ^F ^{G^m} ^F ^{C7} ^{B^b} ^F
 maid; A glo - rious an - gel from Hea - ven came, Un - to that vir - tuous
^F ^{C7} ^{D^m} ^C ^F ^{B^b} ^F ^{C7} ^F
 maid, Un - to that ⁺vir - tuous maid.

⁺ or Virgin.

* Verse 1 does not appear in all versions and may therefore be omitted if the Carol is shortened.
The Mummers repeat the last half of each verse.

1. When righteous Joseph wedded was
Unto a { virtuous } maid,
 { virgin }
A glorious angel from Heaven came
Unto that { virtuous } maid.
 { virgin }
2. O mortal man, remember well
When Christ our Lord was born;
He was crucified betwixt two thieves,
And crownèd with the thorn.
3. O mortal man, remember well
When Christ died on the rood,
'Twas for our sins and wicked ways
Christ shed His precious blood.
4. O mortal man, remember well
When Christ was wrapped in clay,
He was taken to a sepulchre
Where no man ever lay.
5. God bless the mistress of this house
With gold { all } round her breast;
 { chain }
Where e'er her body sleeps or wakes,
Lord, send her soul to rest.
6. God bless the master of this house
With happiness beside;
Where e'er his body rides or walks
Lord Jesus be his guide.
7. God bless your house, your children too,
Your cattle and your store;
The Lord increase you day by day,
And { send } you more and more.
 { give }

an idea of what could be perpetrated, with the best intentions of course, in the way of editing, just compare "She is far from the land" as it appears in Moore's *Irish Melodies* as set by Sir John Stevenson, an admirer of Haydn, with the same song as restored by Stanford. Lucy Broadwood insisted on printing what the singer sang, saying who he was and when and where she heard him. Her example has reached as far as America and her standards are now universally accepted.



Collected by Lucy Broadwood, and first printed in "English Traditional Songs and Carols." Reprinted by permission of Boosey and Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

The following note appears in the book:

"This very beautiful carol was sung several years in succession by Christmas Mummers, also called in Sussex "Tipteers" or "Tipteerers," a name still unexplained in our dialect dictionaries. It was noted in 1880 and 1881, after which the Mummers ceased to act in the neighbourhood of Horsham. They clustered together, wooden swords in hand, at the close of their play "St. George and the Turk," and sang, wholly unconscious of the contrast between the solemnity of the carol and the grotesqueness of their appearance, for they wore dresses of coloured calico, and old "chimney-pot" hats, heavily trimmed with shreds of ribbon, gaudy paper fringes and odd ornaments."

The Mummers play script is in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library at Cecil Sharp House.

The illustration is of Horsham craftsmen in 1850. (From the Editor's collection).