# Old Christmas Carols of the Southern Counties

(Curwen's Edition, 5702.)

Collected and Edited by ALICE E. GILLINGTON

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Editor of "Old Isle of Wight Singing Games," "Old Surrey Singing Games," "Old Hampshire Singing Games," "Eight Hampshire Folk Songs," and "Breton Singing Games."



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#### PREFACE.

Our English gypsies, or as they prefer to be called, travellers, are at last becoming recognised as the best and in some instances the only transmitters of our country's folk music. In the same way that they have kept alive and cherished through the mist of passing centuries the legend, the folk-tale, the dance, and the ballad, so also they have saved from total extinction the carol, which was rapidly dying out amongst our rural population.

Certain it is that at the present day it is only amongst the Romany foki that one may listen enraptured to such carols as:—

"In Dessexshire as it befel,"
"Joseph was an old man,"
"The moon shone bright,"
"God rest you merry, gentlemen,"
The Seven and the Twelve Joys of Mary, and
"Christmas Eve is drawing nigh at hand."

The last-named carol was sung to me by a half-gypsy, who claimed to be a singer in three counties—Surrey, Sussex, and Hants; and the Twelve Joys of Mary by his singularly sweet-voiced wife, while she nursed the sleeping baby in her arms.

Quaint almost to irreverence and crude almost to coarseness would sound some of these older carols in the ears of the present generation, were it not for the altering of word here or a line there, or even the expunging of a verse in part. Yet for purity of purpose and simplicity of expression nothing could be more touching than these forest gypsy-folk's songs of the story of the Holy Birth—woven around though they be with many a curious legend, many a strange tradition.

Thirty to forty years ago the carols of "The moon shone bright" and "God bless you, merry gentlemen" were sung at Christmas at every door in the village by the gypsy children of the Surrey commons; from whom also emanated the Surrey version of the Cherry Tree Carol. To-day it may still be heard, in its Hampshire rendering, among the New Forest gypsy flower-sellers—though hereabouts the door-to-door gypsy carol singing appears to be dying out, their place being largely taken by school and choir boys.

Yet though the Shrovers' and the Mummers' carols are dying out of the Isle of Wight, and the Southampton May-singers no longer assemble on the Bargate, in districts around Southampton, and in Croydon, Surrey, always a musical centre, where several singing customs survive, one may still hear such old carols as:—

"Mary sat weeping,"
"The Sunny Banks,"
"We are not daily beggars,"
"Here comes poor Jack a-howling."

With the old tags of-

"My shoes are very muddy,"
"Christmas is coming," and

"God bless the master of this house,"

sung from door to door throughout the twelve days of Christmas.

Collecting the older carols among the gypsies was far from being an easy task. There were times when one would hear them in the course of an evening given up to song, without having the means, the time, or even enough daylight, to note them down.

To make sure of the words I would have them sent on by letter; the children would then write them down from their mother's lips for me, generally winding up with a message in the Romany rokra:—
"Bisha mandy a bita dikla and the dui cullas for a drop of livenor, and a bita tubla for mi pal! Kushti bokht and best wishes!" Or, simpler still:—

"Bisha mandy a bita lili, chavi!"

But the carol was from its very origin a song or hymn of the open-air, heard by open-air dwellers. So that it is not a matter of wonder that firstly the out-door workers, and lastly the travellers and tent-dwellers should have taken up the refrain of the angels' message and the angels' song and carried it on, with words of warning, comfort, counsel, and command to all home-dwellers, as every Christmas comes round.

ALICE E. GILLINGTON.

The Yellow Caravan,
Thorney Hill,
New Forest, Hants.

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#### The Twelve Joys of Mary.

1. The first good joy that Mary had, it was the joy of one; It was to see her own dear Son when He was born a man; When He was born a man, good Lord, and blessings may it bring, Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to Christ's Eternity.

O, the rising of the sun!
The lifting of the day!
While listening to the merits of gold,
And singing in heaven alway!
Sing Alleluiah!

Sing Alleluu ee!
Sing Allelu, the heavens are true,
Sweet blest Allu-u-ay.

- 2. The next good joy that Mary had, it was the joy of two, It was the joy of her dear Son when He went on to school; When He went on to school, good man, etc.
- 3. The next good joy that Mary had, it was the joy of three, It was the joy of her dear Son when He began to read; When He began to read, good man, etc.
- 4. The next good joy that Mary had, it was the joy of four, It was to see her own dear Son to read the Bible o'er; To read the etc.
- 5. The next good joy that Mary had, it was the joy of five, It was to see her own dear Son turn water into wine, Turn water etc.
- 6. The next good joy that Mary had, it was the joy of six, It was to see her own dear Son to cure the leprosy; To cure the *etc*.
- 7. The next good joy that Mary had, it was the joy of seven, It was the joy of her dear Son making the blind to see; Making the etc.
- 8. The next good joy that Mary had, it was the joy of eight, To see her own Son, Jesus, when He carried the crucifix; When He carried etc.
- 9. The next good joy that Mary had, it was the joy of nine, To see her own Son, Jesus, to from the dead arise; To from the etc.
- 10. The next good joy that Mary had, it was the joy of ten, To see her own Son, Jesus, to open the gates of hell; To open the *etc*.
- 11. The next good joy that Mary had, it was the joy of eleven; It was the joy of her dear Son ascended into heaven;—Ascended into etc.
- 12. The next good joy that Mary had, it was the joy of twelve; It was the joy of her dear Son when the Holy Ghost was sent; When the Holy etc.

## 1. THE TWELVE JOYS OF MARY.

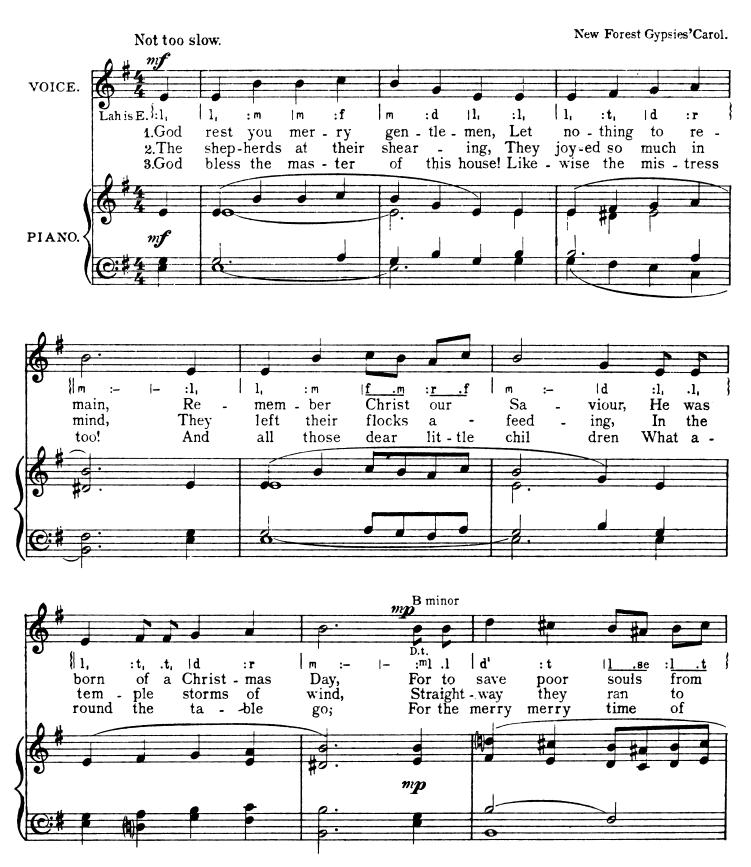




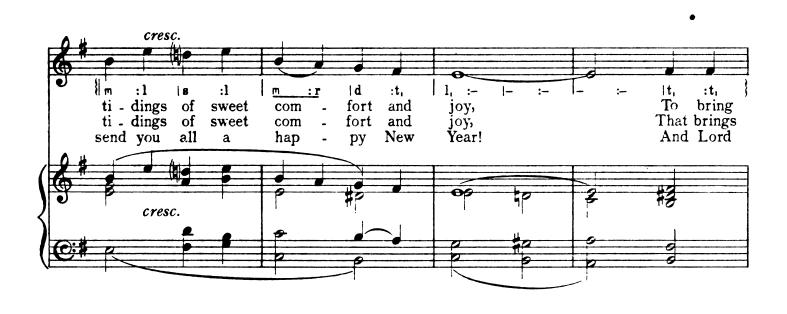
## 2. WE ARE NOT DAILY BEGGARS.



## 3. GOD REST YOU MERRY GENTLEMEN.









## 4. MY SHOES ARE VERY MUDDY.



#### **5**.

## MARY SAT WEEPING.



4. An angel came and called her,
Called her, called her
An angel came and called her
And rolled the stone away.

Refrain:- And rolled the stone away, etc.

## 6. NOW MY DORN IS ENDED.



## 7. CHRISTMAS EVE IS DRAWING NIGH.



Remember man is made of clay;

That in this world we have not long to stay; This wicked world will never give content, With all the blessings as our Lord have sent.

3.

So proud and lofty as some people go, Dressing themselves like poppets in a show; They patch, they paint, they dress in idle stuff Just as if God had not made them fine enough. Down in those gardens flowers grow by ranks, Down on your knees, and return the Lord God thanks; Down on your knees, and pray both night and day; Shake off your sins, and level pride, I pray!

So proud and lofty, there is some sort of sin, Whom many do take d'light and pleasure in; Such conversation God He does not like; He oft-times shakes His rod before He strike.

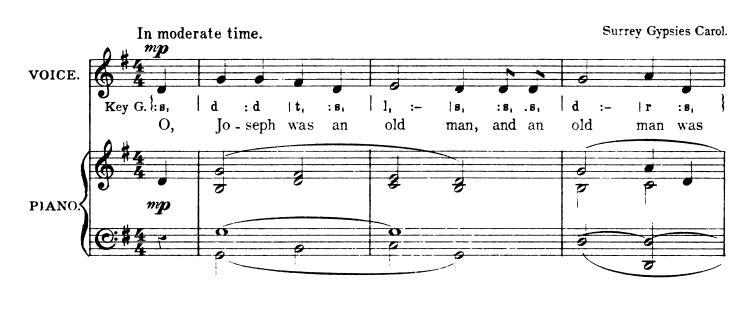
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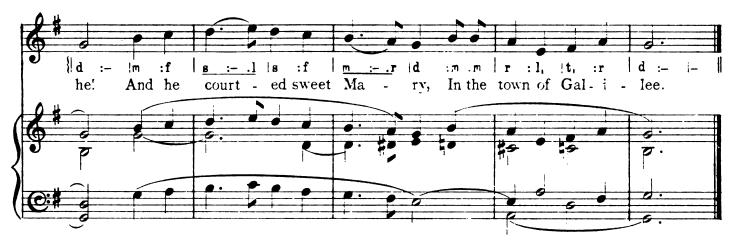
## THE SUNNY BANKS.





## 9. THE CHERRY TREE CAROL.





2.

As Mary was a-walking in the gardenssogreen, Where apples and cherries was plenty to be seen.

3

Then up spake sweet Mary, so meek and mild spake she, "Gather me cherries, Joseph, gather me cherries three."

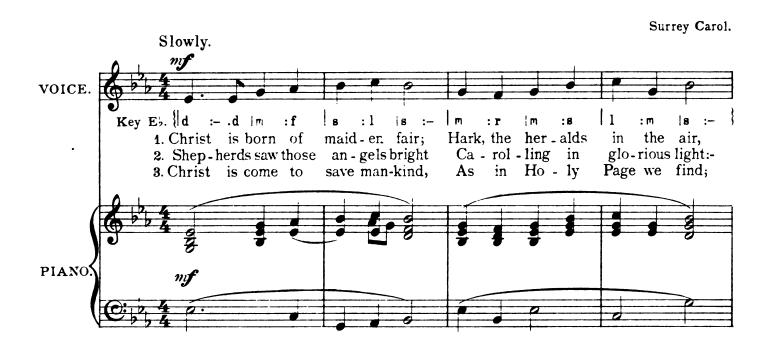
Then up and spake Joseph, these words answered he;

"Gather you cherries for yourself, for you will have none of me."

Then up spake our Saviour, "Bow down to the ground; Bow down, thou lofty cherry tree, that my mother may gather some."

Then the cherry tree it bended, and the cherry tree it broke, And Joseph regretted the words that he had spoke.

## 10. CHRIST IS BORN OF MAIDEN FAIR.





## 11. IN DESSEXSHIRE AS IT BEFEL.



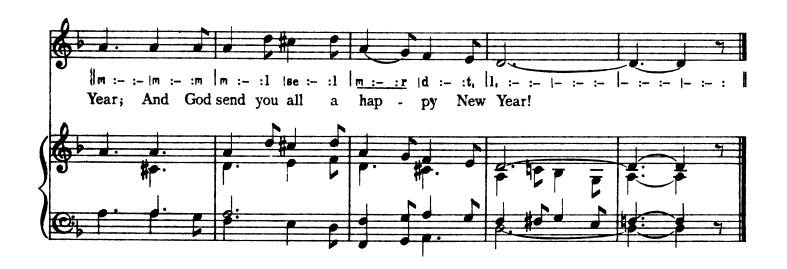


## 12. GOD BLESS THE MASTER.









## 13. WHILE SHEPHERDS WATCHED.



### 14. THE MOON SHONE BRIGHT.



2.
Awake, awake, good people all!
Awake, and you shall hear
How our dear Lord died on the cross
For us He loved so dear!

The fields was green as green could be When, from His heavenly seat,
Our mighty Lord He watered us
With His heavenly dew so sweet.

The life of man is but a span,
And cut down in an hour;
We're here to-day, to morrow gone,
The creatures of an hour.

5.
Instruct and teach your children well
The whiles that you are here,
It may be better for your soul
When your corpse lays on the bier.

To-day you be alive and well
Worth many a thousand pound!
To-morrow dead, and cold as clay,
While your corpse lays underground.
7.

With one stone at your head, good man, And another at your feet! Your good deeds and your bad, good man,

Your good deeds and your bad, good man Will both together meet!

So give you heed to what I sing
While you're alive and sound!
It may be better for your soul
When your corpse lays underground

God bless the master of this house,
God bless the mistress dear!
And all the little children
Around the table here!

God bless you all, both great and small, And send you a happy New Year!

<sup>+</sup> Sung to last two lines of music. 5702

## 15. HERE COMES POOR JACK.





## 16. JOSEPH WAS AN OLD MAN.





- 2. Now as Joseph and Mary was walking in the gardens green There hung cherries black and white, all sorts to be seen.
- 3. Then up spaked Mary, so meek and mild was she, Gather me one cherry, Joseph, from you high cherry tree.
- 4. Then up spaked Joseph-their words were unkind:
  "Let those gather you cherries, Mary, who thereto hath a mind?"
- 5. Then up spake our Saviour: Bow down to the ground
  Bow down thou lawful cherry tree, that my mother may gather some!
- 6. Then the highest limb in the cherry tree bowed down to her knee, That she might gather cherries by one, two, or three.
- 7. Now Mary went to Bethlehem to a place sne was not known, The shepherds there did find her with our Saviour son.
- 8. Now He was not brought forth in parlour nor in hall; But He was brought forth in an old oxen stall.
- 9. He was not wrappèd neither in purple nor pall, But He was wrapped in linen fine, as we was once all.
- 10. And He was not christened in white wine nor in red; But in a well of clear spring, as we was once led.

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