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FOLK MUSIC OF THE UNITED STATES

Issued from the Collections of the Archive of American Folk Song

Long-Playing Record L29

SONGS AND BALLADS OF AMERICAN HISTORY
and of the
ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENTS

Edited by

Duncan Emrich

Preface

With the single exception of "Washington the Great," the songs on the A side of this record deal with the Civil War, while the rare and unique songs on the B side relate to the assassinations of McKinley, Garfield, and Lincoln. None of the songs dealing with the Civil War are sung by men who participated in the conflict, and the time has now passed when they can be so collected. This is greatly to be regretted, particularly since few folksong collectors throughout the United States seem to have gathered -- in recorded form -- the historical songs of the war from the veterans themselves. There is still opportunity, however, to collect the songs from the immediate descendants of veterans, and it is to be hoped that a special effort may be made in this direction, in order that the traditional, or folk, documentation of that period in our history may be the more complete.

The B side of this record, devoted to the songs and ballads of assassination, is most unusual. To the best of our knowledge at this time of writing, only one of them -- "Charles Guiteau" -- has appeared in various scholarly folksong anthologies, while a variant of "Zolgotz" has been collected only once. In addition to the general rarity of the group, it should also be noted that there is present here, in "Mr. Garfield," an example of the cante-fable, a combined account in song and story. This is an extraordinarily unusual item in the field of American folksong, and perhaps not more than half a dozen have been collected in the United States. "Little

Dickie Whigburn" is another example of the cante-fable in our collections, and this will be released in a future series. Worthy of note also is the use of the historical present tense in the account of "Booth Killed Lincoln," a usage not common in the ballad. The contemporary nature of the song -- "not many weeks ago" -- is interesting, as is also the fact that the contemporary time reference has been retained in the passage of the song to us. Another song which the student may wish to hear, dealing not with assassination but with the death of another President, is the lament over the death of "Franklin Delano Roosevelt" as sung by Timoteo Quiñones in Puerto Rico in 1946 (Library of Congress record AAFS 89).

All of the songs of assassination are sung by Bascom Lamar Lunsford of South Turkey Creek, Leicester, Buncombe County, North Carolina. Mr. Lunsford has, from his youth, been an avid amateur collector of the folksongs of the North Carolina mountain area and of neighboring Kentucky. He at first, like his neighbors, merely acquired the songs in the virtually unselfconscious manner in which folklore passes from one person to another, but as collectors like R. W. Gordon began invading the hills, he recognized from them the deeper worth of the materials at hand, and began himself the systematic collection of local and traditional songs. Using the fiddle and banjo which he had learned to play as a young man, he still continued to sing the songs in the traditional, untrained manner to which he had been accustomed. Over a period of years, he has built up his own collection of folksongs gathered from friends and neighbors in North Carolina -- none of them from print -- and, prior to 1949, he very kindly recorded a number of them for Columbia University (aluminum discs) and for the Library of Congress. In 1949, it seemed desirable to rerecord those which he had done in the past as well as adding others not previously recorded. Upon our invitation he visited Washington for a week's time in March, 1949, and recorded for the collections of the Library of Congress -- and for the American people -- over 350 traditional folksongs and ballads. For his willing and selfless cooperation, as well as for his foresightedness in preserving the songs of his own region, we owe him a marked debt of gratitude.

[Sung by Judge Learned W. Hand at Washington, D.C., 1942. Recorded by Alan Lomax.]

"Phil Sheridan," as sung by Judge Learned W. Hand, is an excellent illustration from the folklorist's point of view of the fact that traditional songs are transmitted in the folk manner on all levels of our society. Judge Hand acquired the song from the singing of Mr. Eliot and not from any printed text. The anonymity of origin or source for the song is also an added characteristic of folksong for the "folk," who are not concerned with the ultimate origin of any song but rather only with the immediate transmittor of it. Judge Hand may have inquired about its origin, certainly, but by the very process of oral transmission that origin was lost as the song passed through other hands to reach Mr. Eliot.

Historically, the Valley of Virginia, or the Shenandoah Valley, was a natural, protected gateway for Southern troops moving north, or for Northern troops moving against the South. Several battles took place in it during the Civil War, and Winchester was a frequent battleground. In 1864, General Grant, who recognized the strategic value of this avenue of attack for the Confederacy, ordered General Sheridan to march, with heavy cavalry support, through it as part of the large enveloping movement against Southern forces and against Richmond. General Sheridan did and rendered it useless to the Confederacy, so useless that "a crow flying through the Valley would have had to carry its own rations."

* * *

Phil Sheridan was an Irishman who rose to high degree,
A-fighting for his counteree, as everyone can see;
He proved himself a ginerel at the battle of Winchester,
Another Irishman who rose, his name was Daniel Webster.

"Be good, be good," me father said,
"Although the way be stormy,
Some day you may be Priseydent
Or a ginerel in the army."

H: "That song I first heard in the Harvard Law School sometime about 1895 or 6. It was then sung by a man named George B. Eliot, who was afterwards general counsel of the Atlantic Coast Line, and has since died. He was from North Carolina."

L: "Is that all there was to the song?"

H: "That was all there was to the song, except he had a way...he would sit and cross one leg over the other and keep time with the free leg. And then at the end, after he said 'general of the army,' he would say, 'One, two, three, shift!' And when he shifted, he would cross the...take the free leg and put it down, and put the other leg over the free leg, and it was quite...it had to be quite quick to do it and keep the time. But I know of no more of the song, never heard him sing any more of the song, nor have I any idea where it came from or where he got it."

A2 The following two songs -- "The Iron Merrimac" and "The
and Cumberland's Crew" -- recount, in different manner, the epic
A3 sea battle which changed the whole course of naval history, marking, as it did the advent of the ironclad gunboat and the immediate obsolescence of the old, towering, wooden ships of war. The Merrimac -- originally a Union vessel burned by the retreating Northern forces at Gosport Navy Yard, and reconditioned as the Virginia by the South -- looked like "a terrapin with a smoke-stack on its back." On March 8th, 1862, this strange ironclad craft, with engines that could make no more than five knots and with a hull depth of twenty-three feet, slowly crept forward against the massed strength of the Union fleet in Hampton roads. Commodore Buchanan, commanding the Merrimac, first sighted the Congress, fifty-gun frigate, and the Cumberland, thirty guns. The Congress and Merrimac exchanged broadsides, the Congress receiving the full effect of the guns, while the shot bounced harmlessly off the Merrimac. Buchanan then turned to the Cumberland, rammed her, and cut a deep hole in her side. The Cumberland went down with guns firing to the last, and the colors flying from her tall masts. Buchanan then turned slowly back to the Congress, and inflicted terrible losses on her. The Congress finally struck her colors with the death of her commander. The Union Minnesota also was driven aground in the battle.

The following day, the Merrimac returned to do more battle and damage, but as she moved against the Minnesota and the other great warships, confidently expecting to pick them off one by one, there appeared against her a craft as strange as herself -- a vessel described as "a tin can on a shingle," the Union Monitor, commanded by Lt. John L. Worden. The two pounded each other with shell to no avail whatsoever, and the battle ended as a draw between them.

While it was a draw in terms of the actual sea contest between the two ships, the victory actually lay with the North, since the mere presence of the Monitor from this moment forward protected the great fleet of four hundred transports and supply ships carrying McClellan's forces along the coast against the South. [For further historical details on the battle, see Robert Selph Henry, The Story of the Confederacy, Indianapolis, 1936, p. 107 ff, from which the foregoing note has been largely drawn.]

A2

THE IRON MERRIMAC

[Sung by Judge Learned W. Hand at Washington, D.C., 1942. Recorded by Alan Lomax.]

* * *

The iron Merrimac, with others at her back,
Commanded by Buchanan and the Grandee-O,
From Norfolk started out for to put us all to route,
And to capture little Yankee Doodle Dandy-O.

The Cumberland went down, Minnesoty fast aground,
Which made the Yankee cause look quite disastee-dO,
When, hark, three hearty cheers, and the Monitor appears,
And the music struck up Yankee Doodle Dandy-O.

The rebel shot flew hot, but the Yankees answered not
Till they got within a distance neat and handy-O,
Then said Worden to his crew, "Boys, let's see what we can do,
Oh, we'll fight for little Yankee Doodle Dandy-O!"

H: "That song I learned about, I should suppose 60 years ago in Elizabethtown, which is a very small village in the Adirondack Mountains, Essex County, New York, about eight miles from Lake Champlain. It was then sung by boys of my own age, a few, and I know nothing more about it than that. I think possibly it was sung by my uncle's hired man, who had been in the Civil War, but that I'm very uncertain of. I don't know where we boys picked it up."

[Sung by Capt. Pearl R. Nye at Akron, Ohio, 1937. Recorded by Alan and Elizabeth Lomax.]

* * *

"Oh.. 'The Cumberland's Crew'..."

Oh, comrades, come listen and join in my ditty
Of a terrible battle that happened of late,
Makes Union tars shed a sad tear of pity
When they think of the once gallant Cumberland's fate;
For the eighth day of March told a terrible story,
The most of our seamen to the swells bade adieu,
Our flag it was wrapped in a mantle of glory
By the heroic deeds of the Cumberland's crew.

On the eighth day of March, about ten in the morning,
The sky it was cloudless and bright shone the sun,
When the drum of the Cumberland sounded the warning
Which told every seaman to stand by his gun;
When an ironclad came bearing down on us,
And high in the air the rebel flag flew,
The pennant of treason soon proudly was waving,
Determined to conquer the Cumberland crew.

Then up steps our captain with firm resolution,
Saying, "Boys, by this monster we'll ne'er be dismayed,
Let us fight for the Union's beloved Constitution,
To die for the Union we are not afraid;
Let us fight for the Union's own cause, it is glorious,
For the stars and the stripes we will always prove true,
Let us die at our quarters or conquer victorious!"
Was answered with cheers from the Cumberland's crew.

When our port we flew open, and our guns we let thunder,
Broadships on the enemy like hail did pour,
Our seamen they stood wrapped in great wonder
When the shot struck her side and glanced harmlessly o'er.
The pride of our navy could never be daunted,
The dead and the dying our decks they did strew,
And the Star-Spangled Banner so proudly kept waving,
And stained by the blood of the Cumberland crew.

When traitors found cannon no longer availed them
For fighting those heroes with God on their side,
The cause of secession no longer to quail them,
The blood of our seamen it crimsoned the tide,
She struck amidship, our planks did quiver,
Her sharp iron prow pierced our noble ship through,
And as we were sinking in the dark rolling river,
"We'll die at our guns," said the Cumberland's crew.

Slowly she sank in Virginia's dark waters,
Our voices on swell shall ne'er be heard more,
May we [be] wept by Cumberland's brave sons and proud daughters,
By the blood of the...avenged...Virginia's shore;
In the battle-stained river so silently sleeping,
The most of our heroes and swells bade adieu,
And the Star-Spangled Banner so proudly was waving,
Was hailed by...nailed to the mast by the Cumberland's crew.

Columbia, the gem of the brightest communion,
No flag ever floated so proudly before,
Now while those heroes who fought for the Union,
Beneath those bright stars so exultingly soar,
When any brave heroes in battle assemble,
God bless that dear banner, the red, white, and blue,
For beneath its proud folds we'll cause tyrants to tremble,
Or die at our guns like the Cumberland crew.

A4

THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM CREEK

[Sung by Warde H. Ford at Central Valley, California, 1939. Recorded by Sidney Robertson.]

"The Battle of Antietam Creek" recounts not any part of the battle itself but, rather, the aftermath of the battle and the tragedy of two brothers who participated in it on opposing sides. There were undeniably numerous families which split over the question of the war, some members serving with the Confederacy, and others with the Union forces, but the number of them has certainly been exaggerated in folk legend due to the dramatic impact of any single instance. The present personal ballad, literary in tone, is an example. For a somewhat similar Civil War ballad, heavy with tragic sentiment, the student may wish to hear "The Last Fierce Charge" or "The Battle of Fredericksburg."

* * *

"'The Battle of Antietam Creek'..."

'Twas on the field of Antietam where many's the soldier fell,
Is where occurred the story which now to you I'll tell,
The dead lay all around me, we all together lay,
For we had had a fearful fight upon the field that day.

And as I lay there musing upon the damp, cold ground,
My knapsack for a pillow, my blankets wrapped around,
And as I lay there musing, I heard a bitter cry,
It was, "Lord Jesus, save me, and take me home to die.

"I was the eldest brother, just three years ago
I left my home and kindred for the State of Ohio,
Not finding any other work to which I might apply,
I bound myself apprentice my fortune to try.

"I did not like my master, he did not use me well,
So I fixed a resolution not long with him to dwell,
And with this resolution from him I ran away,
I started then for New Orlands, and cursed be the day.

"'Twas there I was conscripted and sent into the field,
Not having any other hope but I must die or yield,
And so with many another boy I marched away that night,
And this has been the tenth time that I have been in fights.

"I thought a boy who shot me had a familiar face,
But in the battle's fury, 'twas difficult to trace,
I thought it was my brother, Jay, if him I could but see,
I'd kiss him and forgive him, and lay me down and die."

Oh, I quickly ran unto him and heard his story o'er,
It was my long lost brother who lay weltering in his gore;
As I spoke of our loved ones left behind, and soothed his fevered brow,
He whispered, "My dear brother, I can die happy now."

Then quickly as a slumbering babe his fluttering eyelids closed,
I saw him sink with shortening breath to death's long, last repose;
And with many a tear and sad farewell, I scooped a narrow grave,
And there he sleeps beneath the sod by Antietam's rippling wave.

[Sung by Mrs. Minta Morgan at Bells, Texas, 1937. Recorded by John A. Lomax.]

"The Southern Soldier" is a song quite apparently contemporary with the Confederacy itself, and reflects the immediate bitterness of feeling of that period. With the passage of time and with wounds healed, we may look upon it with historic interest. For another song presenting the strong Southern point of view, the listener may wish to hear the post-bellum "Good Old Rebel," Library of Congress record AAFS 97A2.

* * *

I'll place my knapsack on my back, my rifle on my shoulder,
I'll march away to the firing line, and kill that Yankee soldier,
And kill that Yankee soldier,
I'll march away to the firing line, and kill that Yankee soldier.

I'll bid farewell to my wife and child, farewell to my aged mother,
And go and join in the bloody strife, till this cruel war is over,
Till this cruel war is over,
I'll go and join in the bloody strife, till this cruel war is over.

If I am shot on the battlefield, and I should not recover,
Oh, who will protect my wife and child, and care for my aged mother,
And care for my aged mother,
Oh, who will protect my wife and child, and care for my aged mother.

And if our Southern cause is lost, and Southern rights denied us,
We'll be ground beneath the tyrant's heel for our demands of justice,
For our demands of justice,
We'll be ground beneath the tyrant's heel for our demands of justice.

Before the South shall bow her head, before the tyrants harm us,
I'll give my all to the Southern cause, and die in the Southern army,
And die in the Southern army,
I'll give my all to the Southern cause, and die in the Southern army.

If I must die for my home and land, my spirit will not falter,
Oh, here's my heart and here's my hand upon my country's altar,
Upon my country's altar,
Oh, here's my heart and here's my hand upon my country's altar.

Then Heaven be with us in the strife, be with the Southern soldier,
We'll drive the mercenary horde beyond our Southern border,
Beyond our Southern border,
We'll drive the mercenary horde beyond our Southern border.

A6

WASHINGTON THE GREAT

[Sung by Mrs. Minta Morgan at Bells, Texas, 1937. Recorded by John A. Lomax.]

"Washington the Great" was, as Mrs. Morgan indicates, quite palpably a grade-school song designed to inculcate the nobler feelings of patriotism and ambition in young scholars, whose country itself was still young enough to remember vividly its immediate origins. Feeling against the British still runs high in the song, reflecting its close origin to the Revolution itself and our own adolescent period of growth. Surprisingly, there is no cherry tree, although the silver dollar of Rappahannock fame becomes entrenched in American legend.

* * *

I suppose you've heard of Washington, of Washington the Great,
Who fought the French and Indians upon the northern lakes,
And when King George of Engeland oppressed our lovely land,
Our country fought for freedom under Washington's command.

He captured British battleships, and tore their ensign down,
And raised our banner in its place, our banner of renown,
He drove the British from our shores, he whipped them good and strong,
And sent them back to Engeland, the place where they belonged.

He was the first great President, the first to rule the land,
And all the people honored him, down to a single man;
He taught the people to be good, and love their country, too,
And everybody sings his praise, as loudly as we do.

He loved the little children, too, and took them out to ride,
And he threw a silver dollar o'er bold Rappahannock's tide;
And when he died, they buried him beside Potomac's waves,
And raised a marble monument to mark a hero's grave.

If all the boys throughout the land his deeds would emulate,
They'd grow to be like Washington, like Washington the Great.

"Well, this song has been in our immediate family for a hundred years. My father was borned in 1824. He said he learned it when he was about thirteen years old at a country...at the school that he went to, Cogshill school in East Tennessee, MacMinn County."

B1

ZOLGOTZ

[Sung, with banjo, by Bascom Lamar Lunsford of South Turkey Creek, North Carolina, 1949. Recorded at the Library of Congress by Duncan Emrich, George Steele, and Herman Norwood.]

During the month of August, 1901, President William McKinley visited his home in Canton, Ohio, and, following this visit, went to the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo, New York, to deliver a major policy address favoring reciprocal trade agreements. This address was delivered on September 5. The following day, September 6, McKinley was feted at a great reception held for him in one of the public buildings on the exposition grounds. This reception was open to the public, and gave Leon Czolgosz the opportunity to fire two shots from a revolver at the President. The shooting was done at close range, and one bullet penetrated McKinley's abdomen. McKinley was immediately given medical attention, and, in the succeeding days, the world was assured that he would recover from the wound. On September 14, however, McKinley suffered a relapse and died. He was buried in Canton, Ohio, on September 19.

Czolgosz, a young man of Polish descent, may have been induced to commit the act as the result of the intemperate attacks upon the President in the demagogic press. He professed, however, to belong to a group of anarchists believing in the assassination of all rulers and those holding major political offices. Following the shooting, Czolgosz was immediately seized, tried and convicted. He was executed by electrocution at Auburn, New York, October 29. [For a variant of this song, see John A. and Alan Lomax, Our Singing Country, New York, 1941, p. 256, transcribed from Archive of American Folksong record 1523.]

* * *

"The title of this song is "Zolgotz." It's another assassination song. There are some variants to the song; sometimes it's called the 'White House Blues.' I heard Willard Randall sing it about 19 and 23."

Zolgotz, mean man,
He shot McKinley with his handkerchief on his hand,
In Buffalo, in Buffalo.

Zolgotz, you done him wrong,
You shot McKinley when he was walking along,
In Buffalo, in Buffalo.

The pistol fires, then McKinley falls,
And the doctor says, "McKinley, cain't find the ball,"
In Buffalo, in Buffalo.

They sent for the doctor, the doctor come,
He come in a trot, and he come in a run,
To Buffalo, to Buffalo.

He saddled his horse, and he swung on his mane,
And he trotted the horse till he outrun the train
To Buffalo, to Buffalo.

Forty-four boxes all trimmed in braid,
The sixteen-wheel driver, boys, they couldn't make the grade
To Buffalo, to Buffalo.

Forty-four boxes trimmed in lace,
Take him back to the baggage, boys, where we can't see his face,
In Buffalo, in Buffalo.

Mrs. McKinley took a trip, and she took it out west,
Where she couldn't hear the people talk about McKinley's death,
In Buffalo, in Buffalo.

The engine whistled down the line,
Blowing every station, "McKinley was a-dying,"
In Buffalo, in Buffalo.

Seventeen coaches all trimmed in black
Took McKinley to the graveyard, but never brought him back,
To Buffalo, to Buffalo.

Seventeen coaches all trimmed in black
Took Roosevelt to the White House, but never brought him back,
To Buffalo, to Buffalo.

"That was Theodore Roosevelt..."

[Sung, with banjo, by Bascom Lamar Lunsford of South Turkey Creek, North Carolina, 1949. Recorded at the Library of Congress by Duncan Emrich, George Steele, and Herman Norwood.]

James A. Garfield was inaugurated as President in March, 1881, and, a few months later, he was shot in the Baltimore and Ohio railway station in Washington, D. C., while on his way to attend the commencement ceremonies at Williams College. The shooting took place on July 2, but Garfield did not die until September 19, at Elberon, New Jersey, where he had been removed on September 6. The assassin was Charles J. Guiteau, a disappointed office-seeker, whose act was probably influenced by the abuse heaped upon the President by his opponents within the Republican party. Guiteau had come to Washington from Chicago, hoping to receive the appointment as American consul at Marseille, and committed his crime after being rebuffed. His trial and appeal were unnecessarily lengthy, and the sentence of death was not carried out until June 30, 1882. He was hanged at the District of Columbia jail.

Professor Louise Pound suggests that "Charles Guiteau" may be an adaptation of the song "My Name Is John T. Williams," which was quite popular in the years preceding Garfield's assassination.

* * *

"The title of this song is 'Mr. Garfield.' I first heard it about 19 and 03 when I visited the home of Mr. A. W. Williams, who lived on the edge of Henderson County, North Carolina, when I was selling nursery stock. And the boys played it there...Anderson Williams, a young man, picked it and played it on the banjo. First I'd heard it. Afterwards his sisters and Anderson visited our home in Rabbit Ham Creek section of Buncombe County on Hamlin Mountain, where I grew up. Then in 19 and 25, the eminent folksong collector, Dr. R. W. Gordon, came to the mountain country, and I travelled with him some. And I took him to the home of Anderson Williams, at that time a man of some age, and we went to his home one night, and Anderson picked and sang this song. Once after that I heard one stanza by another person. That's the only two people I've ever heard sing the song, besides myself. I sing this and record it here March the 23rd complimentary to Mrs. Emrich, who has been transcribing some of my records and who likes the song."

Going down to the station the other day, and I heard the report of a pistol. And I said to a friend of mine, I says, "What does that mean?" He looked rather excited like, and he give me something sort of like this:

"Oh, they tell me Mr. Garfield is shot
And a-laying mighty low, mighty low,
They tell me Mr. Garfield is shot."

Well, I went on down the street. I saw a large crowd gathering up over there, many people around the house. I went on over, went in, and I saw Mr. Garfield laying there on the bed. I walked up. About that time, the doctor come. He walked in, set his saddle box down beside the bed, went over, and picked up his hand, felt his pulse, says, "How are you feeling Mr. Garfield?" He looked up kind of sad like, and give him something sort of like this:

"Oh, I'm shot down very low down low,
Oh, I'm shot down very low."

Doctor says, Mr. Garfield, you're in pretty bad shape. Better send for a preacher. This is serious." They sent for the preacher. The preacher come after a while, he walked in, stepped over to the bedside, said, "Mr. Garfield, how are you feeling?" Mr. Garfield looked up kind of sad like, give him something sort of like this:

"Oh, I'm shot down very low down low,
Oh, I'm shot down very low."

Preacher said to him, he says, "If you should die tonight," says, "where do you think you'd spend eternity?" He looked up kind of sad like, and give him something sort of like this:

"Oh, I'd make my home in hell, lord, lord,
Oh, I'd make my home in hell."

Preacher said, "This'll never do. You better get your heart right. Better pray." So he got down and prayed a long prayer, got up wiping the sweat off his face, says, "Now, Mr. Garfield, if you should die, where do you think you'd spend eternity?" This time he looked up with a smile on his face, and he give him something sort of like this:

"Oh, I'd make my home in heaven, lord, lord,
Oh, I'd make my home in heaven."

Good many people there that day, and they all stayed for dinner. They called 'em on to eat. There was one town dude there. Asked him what he'd have. He leaned back, give 'em something sort of like this:

"You can pass around your ham and your eggs, lord, lord,
You can pass around your ham and your eggs."

Then there was a country fellow there. They asked him what he'd have. He leaned back and he says, "I want something I'm usen to." And he give 'em something sort of like this:

"Oh, bring on your bacon and your beans, lord, lord,
Oh, bring on your bacon and your beans."

Well, after Mrs. Garfield got through washing the dishes, she come on in, sit down on the bedside where her husband was. She says, "Mr. Garfield, if the worst should come to the worst, and you shouldn't get well, would you be willing for me to marry again?" He looked up, this time with a little smile on his face, and he give her something sort of like this:

"Don't you never let a chance go by, lord, lord,
Don't you never let a chance go by."

I was going down the street a couple of days after that. I saw a strange looking fellow going down on one side of the street, and the sheriff going down on the other side. The sheriff hollered, "Hands up, over there!" The fellow stopped, turned around. Sheriff walked over and stuck a .44 in his face. Says, "Your name Guiteau?" He says, "Yes, pacifarm [pacifier; peace officer?]" Sheriff looked him right in the eye, and he gave him something sort of like this:

"You're the very man I want, Guiteau,
You're the very man I want."

Sheriff put the handcuffs on him, took him on down to jail. Of course, a big crowd followed along down there. I went on down, went on in, walked up to the cell, looked in through the bars, and saw Guiteau sitting there. I says, "Mr. Guiteau, how are you feeling?" He looked up to me kind of sad like, and he give me something sort of like this:

"Going to hang on the 10th of June, lord, lord,
Going to hang on the 10th of June."

Next day I was going down the street, and I saw Mrs. Garfield all dressed in black, tears in her eyes, carrying a large bunch of roses. I says, "Mrs. Garfield, what're you going to do with those roses?" She looked up kind of sad like, and she give me something sort of like this:

"Going to place them on my husband's grave, lord, lord,
Going to place them on my husband's grave."

I says, "Mrs. Garfield, where're you going to bury him at?" She looked up, kind of with a smile on her face, and give me something sort of like this:

"Going to bury him on that long Flowery Branch, lord, lord,
Going to bury him on that long Flowery Branch."

B3

CHARLES GUITTEAU

[Sung by Bascom Lamar Lunsford of South Turkey Creek, North Carolina, 1949. Recorded at the Library of Congress by Duncan Emrich, George Steele, and Herman Norwood.]

See B2 for the note.

* * *

"This is another assassination song known as 'Charles Guiteau'..."

Come all ye Christian people, wherever you may be,
Likewise pay attention to these few lines from me;
On the 30th day of June, when I am condemned to die,
For the murder of James A. Garfield, upon the scaffold high.

Refrain:

My name is Charles Guiteau, my name I'll never deny,
To leave my aged parents in sorrow for to die,
But little did I think when in my youthful bloom
That I'd be carried to the scaffold to meet my fatal doom.

My sister came to see me, to bid me a last farewell,
She threw her arms around me, and bitterly did dwell;
She said, "Brother darling, [for this] you surely must die
For the murder of James A. Garfield, upon the scaffold high."

They carried me to the depot, I thought I'd make my escape,
But Providence was against me, and I found I was too late;
They took me to a prison, all in my youthful bloom,
They carried me to the scaffold to meet my fatal doom.

Now, well, I'm on the scaffold, I bid you all adieu,
The hangman is a-waiting for a quarter of an hour or two;
The black cap's o'er my forehead, I never more can see,
But when I'm dead and buried, you'll all remember me.

My name is Charles Guiteau, my name I'll never deny,
For the killing of James A. Garfield, for that I'm doomed to die.

B4

BOOTH KILLED LINCOLN

[Sung by Bascom Lamar Lunsford of South Turkey Creek, North Carolina, 1949. Recorded at the Library of Congress by Duncan Emrich, George Steele, and Herman Norwood.]

On the evening of April 14, 1865, President Lincoln, with his family and friends, attended a play at Ford's Theater in Washington. While Lincoln was absorbed with the play, John Wilkes Booth, who had conspired with others to assassinate the President, entered the narrow corridor leading to the upper stage-box. He closed this corridor against further ingress by closing the door and dropping a wooden bar. Then stealthily entering the box, he discharged his pistol against Lincoln's head, and, brandishing a large knife, leaped to the stage and escaped. The beloved President was carried to a house across the street, where he died the following morning. Booth was shot and killed by pursuers twelve days later.

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"The title of this ballad is 'Booth,' or 'Booth Killed Lincoln.' It's an old fiddle tune, and there are a few variants of the song. I heard my father hum it and sing a few of the stanzas when I was just a boy about six or ten years old."

Wilkes Booth came to Washington, an actor great was he,
He played at Ford's Theater, and Lincoln went to see;
It was early in April, not many weeks ago,
The people of this fair city all gathered at the show.

The war it is all over, the people happy now,
And Abraham Lincoln arose to make his bow;
The people cheer him wildly, arising to their feet,
And Lincoln waving of his hand, he calmly takes his seat.

And while he sees the play go on, his thoughts are running deep,
His darling wife, close by his side, has fallen fast asleep;
From the box there hangs a flag, it is not the Stars and Bars,
The flag that holds within its folds bright gleaming Stripes and Stars.

J. Wilkes Booth he moves down the aisle, he had measured once before,
He passes Lincoln's bodyguard a-nodding at the door;
He holds a dagger in his right hand, a pistol in his left,
He shoots poor Lincoln in the temple, and sends his soul to rest.

The wife awakes from slumber, and screams in her rage,
Booth jumps over the railing, and lands him on the stage;
He'll rue the day, he'll rue the hour, as God him life shall give,
When Booth stood in the center stage, crying, "Tyrants shall not live!"

The people all excited then, cried everyone, "A hand!"
Cried all the people near, "For God's sake, save that man!"
Then Booth ran back with boot and spur across the back stage floor,
He mounts that trusty claybank mare, all saddled at the door.

J. Wilkes Booth, in his last play, all dressed in broadcloth deep,
He gallops down the alleyway, I hear those horses feet;
Poor Lincoln then was heard to say, and all has gone to rest,
"Of all the actors in this town, I loved Wilkes Booth the best."

B5

BOOTH KILLED LINCOLN (FIDDLE TUNE)

[Played by Bascom Lamar Lunsford of South Turkey Creek, North Carolina, 1949. Recorded at the Library of Congress by Duncan Emrich, George Steele, and Herman Norwood.]

See B4 for the note.

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"Now the fiddle tune runs like this...."