

How Happy Is the Sportsman

As sung by
J. L. Peters

Originally in E
08-21-1946 Beloit, WI

Verse



How hap-py is the sports - man who loves to hunt the fox, hun-ting for bo-we - na a -

Refrain



mong the geese and ducks. Come hic come hic come hi low a - long the mer - ry stream, with a



ra - ta - ta tip - a - tip - a tan and with the roy - al bow wow wow. Ru - da



lu - lu - beal bine zing fid - dle did - dle dee and i - dy, and



through the woods we'll run brave boys, and through the woods we'll run.

Verse 1.

How happy is the sportsman who loves to hunt the fox,
Hunting for bowena among the geese and ducks.

Refrain

Come hic come hic come hi low a long the merry stream,
With a ratata tipatipatan and with the royal bow wow wow.
Ruda lulu beal bine zing fiddle diddle dee and idy,
And through the woods we'll run brave boys,
And through the woods we'll run.

Verse 2.

The first I saw the farmer a-hoeing in his corn,
He said he saw bowena across the waters lorn.

Refrain

Verse 3.

The next we saw a blind man, as blind as he could be,
He said he saw bowena run up a hollow tree

Refrain

Critical Commentary

Transcriptions by MB and HST.

HST notes:

In the Professional Papers series:

Sung by J. L. Peters, age 60, Beloit, 1946.

This ballad was brought to Wisconsin from England, by the Cornish who settled in the lead mining area of the southwestern Wisconsin in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Mr. Peters learned the song, when a small boy in Mineral Point, from hearing his father and grandfather sing it.

Baring-Gould, who collected the song in England, refers to it as a very old ballad, which dates back at least to the early seventeenth century. Around 1888, he obtained the song from an old quarryman at Merrivale Bridge in Devon, near the border of Cornwall. The Baring-Gould version begins, "There were three jovial Welshmen" and refers to the fox as Reynard. In Mr. Peters' song, the fox is called Bowena. The verses of the two versions are similar, but the melodies have little in common.

Mrs. Margaret Gullickson Anderson, as a little Norwegian girl among the Cornish children in Dodgeville, learned the song from them. In later years she sang it to all her children and grandchildren.

Her version includes the verse:

The next to come was a fair maid

Acombing out her locks

She said she saw poor Reyny

Among the hills and rocks.

Editor's notes:

Flanders writes that the text was first printed in *The Woods' Chorister* ("an early ballad book in the British Museum") (Flanders 196). Eddy explains that "Balriginor" and "Bull Raider" in the versions she collected "are perversions of 'Beau Reynard', the fox of tradition" (Eddy 204).

Alternate titles/related songs: "Bold Reynard," "The Ranger."

Sources:

Eddy, Mary O., coll. and arr. *Ballads and Songs from Ohio*. New York: J. J. Augustin, 1939. "The Ranger."

Flanders, Helen Hartness, Elizabeth Flanders Ballard, George Brown, and Phillips Barry, colls., trans., and eds. *The New Green Mountain Songster: Traditional Folk Songs of Vermont*. New Haven: Yale University Press; London: H. Milford: Oxford University Press, 1939. "Bold Reynard" tune rather different.

Linscott, Eloise Hubbard, coll. and ed. *Folk Songs of Old New England*. New York: Macmillan, 1939.

K.G.