

The Bird Song

Informant/Performer:
Mrs. Jane Gentry
Hot Springs, NC., 1916

Source:
Olive Dame Campbell
English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians
New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1917

Says the robin as he flew,
When I was a young man I chose two.
If one did - n't love me, the oth - er one would,
And don't you think my no - tion's good?

2. Says the blackbird to the crow,
What makes the white folks hate us so?
Why ever since old Adam was born,
It's been our trade to pull up corn.
3. Hoot! says the owl with her head so white,
A lonesome day and a lonesome night.
Thought I heard some pretty girl say
She'd court all night and sleep all day.
4. No, no, says the turtle dove
That's no way for to gain his love.
If you want to gain your heart's delight,
Keep him awake both day and night.

Background Information

"A favorite tune of the American frontier, sometimes known as the "bird song", this and numerous other versions are traceable to an English song with endless stanzas, each devoted to a different bird. Chaucer's Parliament of Fowles is one of its ancestors which in turn derives from an ancient folk tale in which Dame nature summons all the birds on St. Valentine's Day to compete for the favors of a female eagle. Only traces of these origins still remain, and the song has taken on a distinctly American flavor."

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