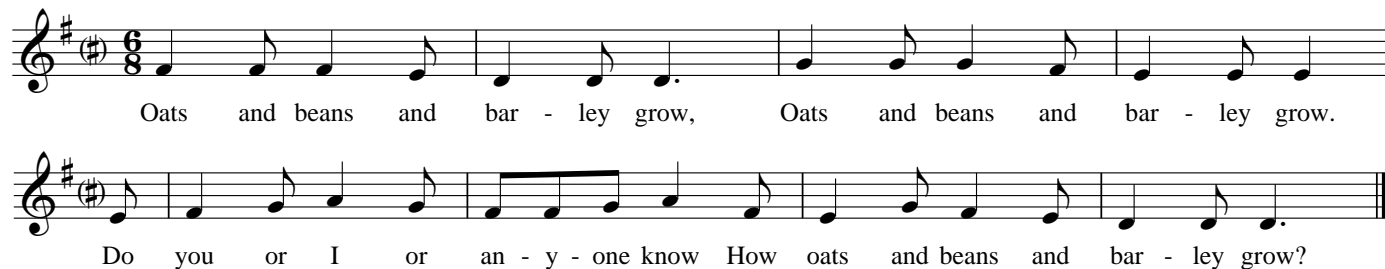


# Oats and Beans and Barley Grow

Informant/Performer:  
Eleanor G. Locke  
Amherst, MA, 1920s

Source:  
Eleanor G. Locke, ed.  
*American Folk Songs for Teaching*  
(unpublished collection)  
Oakland, Calif.: Holy Names College, 1978



2. First the farmer sows his seed,  
Then he stands and takes his ease,  
Stamps his foot, and claps his hands,  
Then turns around to view the land.
3. Waiting for a partner,  
Waiting for a partner!  
Open the ring and take one in!  
While all the others dance and sing.
4. Tra-la-la...

Verses from Alice B. Gomme, *Traditional Games of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (Vol. II)

Traditional 4th verse:

Now you are married you must obey,  
You must be true to all you say,  
You must be kind, you must be good,  
And help your wife to chop the wood!

## Game Directions

Single circle, hands joined: one player in center as the "farmer."

Circle walks to the left singing verse 1. On verse 2, the circle stands and joins the farmer in acting out the words.

On the 3rd verse the circle walks to the left while the farmer chooses a partner. On the last verse the circle skips around to the left, while the farmer and his partner skip to the right. Partner then becomes the new farmer.

## Background Information

This round, familiar to all American [and English] children, is still a favorite in France, Provence, Spain, Italy, Sicily, Germany, and Sweden; it was played by Froissart (born 1337), and Rabelais (born 1483); while the general resemblance of the song in European countries proves that in the five centuries through which we thus trace it, even the words have undergone little change. Like the first game of our collection [Knights of Spain], it is properly a dance rather of young people than of children; and a comparative examination of versions inclines us to the belief that it is of Romance descent.

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(background information continued)

The lines of the French refrain, and the general form of the dance, suggest that the song may probably have had (perhaps in remote classic time) a religious and symbolic meaning, and formed part of rustic festivities designed to promote the fertility of the fields; an object which undoubtedly formed the original purpose of the May festival. So much for conjecture; but, in any case, it is pleasant to think of the many generations of children, in so many widely separated lands, who have rejoiced in the pretty game.