

34 THE SPRIG OF THYME

Collected by CECIL J. SHARP

O once I had thyme of my own, And in my own gar - den it
grew; I used to know the place where my thyme it did grow, But
now it is cov - er'd with rue, with rue, But now it is cov - er'd with rue.

1 O once I had thyme of my own,
And in my own garden it grew;
I used to know the place where my thyme it did grow,
But now it is cover'd with rue, with rue,
But now it is cover'd with rue.

2 The rue it is a flourishing thing,
It flourishes by night and by day;
So beware of a young man's flattering tongue,
He will steal your thyme away, away,
He will steal your thyme away.

3 I sowed my garden full of seeds;
But the small birds they carried them away
In April, May, and in June likewise,
When the small birds sing all day, all day,
When the small birds sing all day.

4 In June there was a red-a-rosy bud,
And that seem'd the flower for me;
And often times I snatch-ed at the red-a-rosy bud,
Till I gain-ed the willow, willow tree,
Till I gain-ed the willow tree.

5 O the willow, willow tree it will twist,
And the willow, willow tree it will twine;
And so it was that young and false-hearted man
When he gain-ed this heart of mine, of mine,
When he gain-ed this heart of mine.

6 O thyme it is a precious, precious thing
On the road that the sun shines upon;
But thyme it is a thing that will bring you to an end,
And that's how my time has gone, has gone,
And that's how my time has gone.

NOTE

Although this and the preceding song (No. 33, "The Seeds of Love") spring from the same root, it is, I think, quite possible to distinguish them, both tunes and words. "The Sprig of Thyme" is, I imagine, the older of the two. Its tone is usually modal, very sad and intense, and somewhat rugged and forceful in character; while its words are abstract and reflective, and sometimes obscure. On the other hand, the words of "The Seeds of Love," although symbolical, are quite clear in their meaning; they are more modern in their diction, and are usually sung to a bright, flowing melody, generally in the major mode.

For other versions with words, see the 'Journal of the Folk-Song Society' (volume ii, p. 288); 'Folk Songs from Dorset' (p. 10); and 'Songs of the West' (No. 7, 2nd ed.).

The words in the text are those that the singer sang me, supplemented from those of other sets in my collection. I used the tune, which is in the Aeolian mode, for the "Still music" in Mr. Granville Barker's production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' (Act iv, Sc. I).