

Early Narrative Ballads // anonymous

Forefathers' Song (1630)

New England's annoyances you that would know them,
 Pray ponder these verses which briefly doth show them.
 The place where we live is a wilderness wood,
 Where grass is much wanting that's fruitful and good:
 Our mountains and hills and our valleys below,
 Being commonly covered with ice and with snow;
 And when the north-west wind with violence blows,
 Then every man pull his cap over his nose:
 But if any's so hardy and will it withstand,
 He forfeits a finger, a foot, or a hand.

But when the Spring opens we then take the hoe,
 And make the ground ready to plant and to sow;
 Our corn being planted and seed being sown,
 The worms destroy much before it is grown;
 And when it is growing, some spoil there is made
 By birds and by squirrels that pluck up the blade;
 And when it is come to full corn in the ear,
 It is often destroyed by raccoon and by deer.

And now our garments begin to grow thin,
 And wool is much wanted to card and to spin;
 If we can get a garment to cover without,
 Our other in-garments are clout upon clout:
 Our clothes we brought with us are apt to be torn,
 They need to be clouted soon after they're worn,

But clouting our garments they hinder us nothing,
 Clouts double are warmer than single whole clothing.

If fresh meat be wanting to fill up our dish
 We have carrots and turnips as much as we wish:
 And if there's a mind for a delicate dish
 We repair to the clam-banks, and there we catch fish.
 Instead of pottage and puddings and custards and pies,
 Our pumpkins and parsnips are common supplies;
 We have pumpkins at morning and pumpkins at noon,
 If it was not for pumpkins we should be undone!
 If barley be wanting to make into malt,
 We must be contented, and think it no fault;
 For we make liquor to sweeten our lips,
 Of pumpkins and parsnips and walnut-tree chips....

Now while some are going let others be coming,
 For while liquor's boiling it must have a scumming;
 But I will not blame them, for birds of a feather
 By seeking their fellows are flocking together.
 But you whom the Lord intends hither to bring,
 Forsake not the honey for fear of the sting;
 But bring both a quiet and contented mind,
 And all needful blessing you surely will find.

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We Gather Together (1630)

We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing,
He chastens and hastens His will to make known.
The wicked oppressing now cease to be distressing,
Sing praises to His name for He forgets not His own.

Beside us to guide us our God with us joining,
Ordaining, maintaining His kingdom divine.
So from the beginning the fighting we were winning,
Thou Lord wast at our side and all the glory be Thine.

We all do extol Thee, Thou leader triumphant,
And pray that Thou still our defender wilt be.
Let thy congregation escape all tribulation,
Thy name be ever praised in glory, Lord make us free.