

Songs and Other Verses

Dollie Radford

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Songs and Other Verses

Dollie Radford

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- FROM OUR EMANCIPATED AUNT IN TOWN.

SONGS

I COULD not through the burning day
In hope prevail,
Beside my task I could not stay,
If love should fail.

Nor underneath the evening sky,
When labours cease,
Fold both my tired hands and lie
At last in peace.

Ah, what to me in death or life
Could then avail!
I dare not ask for rest or strife
If love should fail.

BECAUSE I built my nest so high,
Must I despair
If a fierce wind, with bitter cry,
Passes the lower branches by,
And mine makes bare?

Because I hung it, in my pride
So near the skies,
Higher than other nests abide,
Must I lament if far and wide
It scattered lies?

I shall but build, and build my best,
Till, safety won,
I hang aloft my new-made nest,
High as of old, and see it rest
As near the sun.

MY lover's lute has golden strings,
Bright as the sunlight in the air,
My lover touches them and sings
His happy music everywhere.

My lover's eyes see very far,
Through the great toiling in the street,
To where the sea and mountains are,

Songs and Other Verses

And all the land lies still and sweet.

My lover's lips are very kind,
He smiles on all who pass him by,
And all who pass him, leave behind
A greeting, with a smile or sigh.

My lover's heart, ah none may say
How tenderly it beats for me,
And, if I took my love away,
How silent all its song would be.

IF all the world were right,
How fair our love would grow,
At what a golden height
Its spotless flower could blow.

Through what untroubled air
Its fragrant boughs would spread,
On fruit how sweet and rare
Should we be freely fed.

But ah, what could we tend,
With sorrow and delight,
Our hearts how should we spend,
If all the world were right!

IF my poor words were colours,
A magic brush my pen,
Ah me, what radiant pages
My songs would make you then.

The fairest tints of morning
Should picture hopes for you,
My joy in your sweet living,
The sky's divinest blue.

In purple and in crimson
My thoughts of you should twine,
And through them all my love, dear
In purest gold would shine.

THE little songs which come and go,
In tender measures, to and fro,
Whene'er the day brings you to me,

Songs and Other Verses

Keep my heart full of melody.

But on my lute I strive in vain
To play the music o'er again,
And you, dear love, will never know
The little songs which come and go.

WHEN summer sweetness fills the land,
And summer sunlight floods the sea,
When ships sail by on either hand,
A richly laden argosy;
Oh may my boat, well freighted, ride
With priceless treasures on the tide.

When cruel winds beat on the sea,
And angry clouds blot out the land,
When on the waters close to me
The shattered ships drift by unmanned,
O may my heart be strong to bear
Its portion, in the great despair.

AH, bring it not so grudgingly,
The gift thou bringest me,
Thy kind hands shining from afar
Let me in welcome see,
And know the treasure that they hold,
For purest gold.

And with glad feet that linger not,
Come through the summer land,
Through the sweet fragrance of the flowers,
Swiftly to where I stand,
And in the sunshine let me wear
Thy token rare.

Fairer for me will be the day,
Fair all the days will be,
And thy rich gift upon my breast
Will make me fair to see;
And beautiful, through all the years,
In joys and tears.

Ah come, and coming do not ask
The answering gift of mine,
Thou hast the pride of offering,
Taste now the joy divine,
And come, content to pass to-day

Songs and Other Verses

Empty away.

HOW shall I, in my pride, array
The one I choose,
What purple and what gems display
For her to use,
What flowing silk and flowered hem,
What diadem?

What shall I, in my love, desire
Her eyes to see,
When she steps forth in her attire
So daintily,
What pathway shall I deem most meet
For her dear feet?

Each thread of gold, in Heaven wrought,
Which I receive
To fashion my divinest thought,
I will inweave,
And twine a rare and royal dress
For my princess.

In her clear sight the magic earth
Shall all be fair,
No evil thing will come to birth
In her pure air,
All paths shall turn to fragrant ways
Wherein she strays.

OUTSIDE your heart the lonely way
Is dark and cold,
There is no light nor guiding ray,
From any fold.

Through all the black encircling air
And blinding rain,
I stretch my hands, in my despair,
For help in vain.

The wind blows downward from the hills
In fierce unrest,
And bears me wheresoe'er it wills,
Upon its breast.

Oh let your heart be opened wide,
For pity's sake,
And bid me come again inside,
Where mine may break.

AH, Love, through what unfathomed deeps
Thy feet have sped,
Up what bare hills and barren steeps
Thy hands have led,
What bitter nights and burning days
Have marked thy ways.

Songs and Other Verses

And I have followed all the while,
So close to thee,
Hoping thou wouldest turn and smile,
To gladden me,
To tell me we should safely come
To thy fair home.

But thou dost ever onward press,
With hidden face,
Ah surely none may wear thy dress,
None take thy place;
Ah tell me it is thou indeed
With whom I speed.

Dear Love, dear Love, thy tightening hand
Is stern and cold,
I see the gates of thy great land
Grown clear and bold,
And Death, alone, comes forth in peace,
To my release.

AND will you sing the songs anew,
The songs you made for me,
When, in the sunrise and the dew,
The earth seemed made so fair, for you
To turn to melody?

And will you seek the flowers again
You gathered in the spring,
Sweet flowers, fragrant with the rain
Of tears you will not weep again,
In all your gathering?

Ah no, the morning songs are sung,
And Time treads on apace,
High overhead the sun is hung,
While in its heat your life is swung,
God grant you fullest grace!

And tuneful ear to string your lute
To every season's range,
Until your lips are cold and mute,
Till song and blossom bear their fruit
In the great changeless change.

And when the last full numbers break,
The songs you made for me
Shall stir, as when the birds awake,
And in your heart sweet singing make,

Of golden memory.

HOW can I measure your sorrow,
How do I know
The weight of to-day and to-morrow,
Of days long ago,
The grief, and the burden to follow,
Which speech may not show?

Deep in my heart is the measure,
Laid by the years,
To fathom, beneath all your pleasure
The flood of your tears,
To mark all the desolate leisure
Your lonely heart fears.

IF you will sing the songs I play,
Then you shall be my dear,
And I will cherish you always,
And love you far and near;
If you will, in sweet singing, say
The songs I play.

And if to all my deeper strain
A golden rhyme you learn,
Ah me, to what a rich refrain
My striving chords shall turn;
If you will learn the deeper strain,
The great refrain.

THROUGH all the golden summer-time
Your fancy follows me,
As lightly as the thistle-down
Comes floating out to sea.

Frailer than any flower that grows
Beside the changing tide,
It braves the waters carelessly,
Where I, in danger, ride.

Oh bid them both fly home again,
Such fair and fragile things,
Lest I may strive to capture them,
To cheer my wanderings.

Songs and Other Verses

I DO not love you very much,
Only your tuneful voice,
Which, in a happy moment, takes
The music of my choice.

I do not love you, dear, at all,
Only your merry ways,
Which linger in my mind, and set
Me dreaming through the days.

In truth, I think it is dislike
You kindle in my heart,
Because you come so joyously
To steal so large a part.

TO MY CHILDREN

SHALL I make a song for you Children dear,
Not too hard or long for you, Just as clear
As your lives which opened so, A while ago?

How shall I find any word Old or new,
That the wise earth has not heard Ages through,
Ever since her ways grew sweet With little feet?

How you bless my day and hour, She can say,
As the sweet spotless flower Of her May
Lies in fullest bloom at rest, Upon her breast.

All the happy service done, Well she knows,
All the longing, and the one Prayer that goes
Trembling through the unknown years, For you my dears.

How I love you, she repeats, How rejoice,
All my singing she completes, For my voice,
Of the song in her great heart, Is but a part.

SLEEP my little dearest one,
I will guard thy sleep,
Safely little nearest one,
I will hold thee deep,
In the dark unfathomed sea
Where sweet dreams are made for thee.

Rest my little baby dear,
I will watch thy rest,
Thou shalt feel the waters near,
Only on my breast;
In the strong and tender tide,
Still my love shall be thy guide.

MY little dear, so fast asleep,
Whose arms about me cling,
What kisses shall she have to keep,
While she is slumbering?

Upon her golden baby-hair,
The golden dreams I'll kiss
Which Life spread through my morning fair,

Songs and Other Verses

And I have saved, for this.

Upon her baby eyes I'll press
The kiss Love gave to me,
When his great joy and loveliness
Made all things fair to see.

And on her lips, with smiles astir,
Ah me, what prayer of old
May now be kissed to comfort her,
Should Love or Life grow cold.

HOW THE UNKNOWN POETS DIE.

IN the light of a summer sky,
In the warmth of a noon-day sun,
With the roses in fullest bloom,
With the gold of the hours to run;
With the earth breathing deep for joy
Of the riches that deck her breast,
With her promises new and sweet,
They pass to their early rest.

In the busy and eager town,
In the desolate crowded street,
In a passionate great despair
For the face which they do not meet;
With the world passing heedless by
In its pleasure and pride and strife,
While its magical pulses beat
They silently slip from life.

For the want of a tender hand
To lead lovingly through the flowers,
To the place where their home was laid
With its treasure of tuneful hours,
Long ago when the earth was young,
By the spirits of land and sea,
In the quest of their hidden home
They close their eyes mournfully.

For the need of a kindly voice
To bid theirs arise clear and strong,
To remind them the world has need,
Ever need of a helping song;
For the want of a healing word
For their hurts on the stony way,
For the want of their daily bread
They pass, as the chosen may.

With the tears in their tired hearts,
Burning tears which they dared not weep,
In the sorrows that gave them birth,
In the watches they had to keep;
In the love which they gave and sought,
In the longings they strove to quell,
In the life which they tried to live,
And passing, for them, is well.

In the flood of a triumph song,

Songs and Other Verses

From the burden of words set free,
In the beautiful last release
Of a striving life melody;
In the brightest of all their hopes,
In the sweetness of sweetest days,
In the fairness of fairest dreams,
They welcome the unknown ways.

In the strength of a last resolve,
If their life should return again,
To be glad of the bitter road,
To be glad of the hurt and pain;
For the sake of the radiant heights
They had climbed ere the years were spent,
For the joy of the moments there,
They die, and are well content.

TO THE CARYATID

In the Elgin Room—British Museum.

SO long ago, and day by day,
I came to learn from you, to pray,
You did not hear, you did not know
The thing I craved, so long ago.

The days were always days of spring,
Hope laid her hand on every thing,
And in your golden room, on me,
She rested it most lovingly.

Of all the season's sun and showers,
I gathered up the fairest flowers,
And brought my garlands, fresh and sweet,
To place in gladness at your feet.

And prayed to stand in strength, as you,
Through the long years untried and new,
With dauntless mien and steadfast gaze,
To bear the burden of the days.

Now many tired years are told,
My prayer long since is dead and cold,
You were too wise to grant it me,
Although I prayed so patiently.

But at your feet my flowers lie,
The happy flowers which cannot die,
I see them through my tears, and know
They are as sweet as long ago.

COMRADES.

WHAT shall I do when you pass by
And gaze at me so quietly,
What shall I give of all my store,
To help you to your joy once more!

Some jewelled gift, some treasured thing,
I had not meant for offering;
Shall I not bid you take the whole
Of what I prize, to heal your soul!

For I have seen the lonely track,
The cruel chasms, bitter black,
The stony roads no pastures meet,
Which you have pressed with bleeding feet.

And heard afar the dire refrain,
Which beat upon your heart and brain,
The thunders through your darkness hurled,
Fraught with the griefs of all the world.

And I have known the tears, the strife,
Which wasted all your gold of life,
The precious hoard God meant should last,
Till your perfectèd years were past.

And pictured the relentless days,
Through which the sunlight never strays,
Stretching before you like a sea,
Ever more dark and drearily.

What shall I give, what shall I say
To help you on your lonely way,
A kindly hand, a smile or so,
A gentler glance—for all I know?

May be a tender word or two,
At most a prayer, or tear for you,
And strength to tell you help is vain,
Dead joys do never rise again.

FOR WINDOWS BY L. D.

ARISING from her jewelled bower,
Dawn steps from out the flaming sky,
And in her hand are hopes that flower,
And at her feet the hours that die.

And ere the darkest shadows fall,
Sweet Evening comes from twilight lands,
And pours her peace upon us all,
And touches us with healing hands.

A CONCERT.

AH, was it all a fantasy,
You in your distant stall,
The silver stream of melody
Which floated through the hall,
And I, in my obscurer place,
Gazing upon your flower-faces?

Around you how the music clung
And trembled, till a sea
Of passion was unbound and swung
Between your face and me;
And you were hidden from my sight,
Plunged into waves of blackest night.

And when the strife and tumult ceased,
The music wandered far,
From all its human load released,
To moon and evening star,
Where a few notes most clear and true,
Pierced the deep Heaven's deepest blue.

Ah, was it all a fantasy!
The outer world we reach,
As cold and distant as may be,
A stranger, each to each;
But in my heart a sound so sweet,
All Paradise is in the street.

TO A STRANGER.

LAST night I lay and dreamed of you,
Through all the wind and rain,
So close a part I seemed of you,
I could not wake again;
Sunk in your spirit, deep, so deep,
In the blue caverns of my sleep.

Your face seemed full of love for me,
You knew my heart's desire,
Vague and unquiet as the sea,
For which I toil and tire
With prayer and pilgrimage and tears,
Through all the rolling of the years.

You welcomed me with gentle hands,
As one expected long,
The earth seemed made of golden lands,
And life an angel-song,
Fervent and full from rise to fall,
With God's great music through it all.

How came it to be you I sought,
In the wide realm of sleep?
Remote from all my waking thought,
As the two ways we keep
Are distant, with dark growths between,
Making each day a surer screen.

And now you draw me with a spell
I have no power to break,
My lonely heart alone knows well
How it must ache and ache:
I pray you do not pass to-day,
Till I have dreamed my dream away!

OCTOBER.

FROM falling leaf to falling leaf,
How strange it was, through all the year,
In all its joy and all its grief,
You did not know I loved you dear;
Through all the winter-time and spring,
You smiled and watched me come and go,
Through all the summer blossoming,
How strange it was you did not know!

Your face shone from my earth and sky,
Your voice was in my heart always,
Days were as dreams when you were by,
And nights of dreaming linked the days;
In my great joy I craved so much,
My life lay trembling at your hand,
I prayed you for one magic touch,
How strange you did not understand!

From leaf to leaf, the trees are bare,
The autumn wind is cold and stern,
And outlined in the clear sharp air,
Lies a new world for me to learn;
Stranger than all dear friend, to-day,
You take my hand and do not know
A thousand years have passed away,
Since last year—when I loved you so.

IN SUMMER DAYS.

IS it the sunshine on my eyes
Such slumber throws,
Here as I sit, too tired to rise,
They to uncloze:
Here as I sit with work undone,
In the wind and sun?

Is it the sunshine makes me weep,
My little ones,
Makes me silently pray for sleep,
As the day runs
From morn to noon and noon to night,
And the quiet star-light?

Ah sun and wind, so strong and good,
That lap me round
With all the sweetness of the wood
From tree and ground;
You make no cheeks with sorrow wet,
And no sad eyes set.

I weep for one short hour to sing,
In all the day,
The happy fancies I would bring
The children's play;
To give the gifts they ask of me,
Which should be so free.

My hand to take when sights are new,
And strange thoughts grow,
My heart to lean on, with the few
Child-dreams I know;
My loving arms throughout the years
For their smiles and tears.

And ever I go out and in
More wearily,
With shrunken life so pale and thin,
And drearily
I murmur that I must not stay,
For their grief or play.

I must not stay, the hours are fleet,
And much to do,
And much to earn for daily meat,
The days all through,

Songs and Other Verses

To keep the little hard won nest
For the children's rest.

Ah lady with the folded hands,
 You drive in state,
So close to where my baby stands
 Most desolate,
With folded hands you pass, each day,
And you look away!

NOBODY IN TOWN.

I STAND upon my island home,
My island home in Regent Street,
And listen to the ceaseless foam
Of traffic breaking at my feet:
The sky above is clear and sweet,
The summer day is smiling down,
I muse upon it, and repeat
That there is nobody in town.

All day a living metronome
Keeps up a firm relentless beat,
All day the little children roam
Through airless alleys, in the heat;
All day the men and women meet
With tired eyes, and settled frown,
I marvel, in my safe retreat,
That there is nobody in town.

Ah world beneath the sky's blue dome,
In flannels white, and spotless gown,
Ah would that such a day might come,
When there was nobody in town.

A NOVEMBER ROSE.

YOU came to see me yesterday,
And plucked a rose-bud on your way, Do you remember?

From the sweet bush beside your gate,
I did not know it bloomed as late As dull November.

To-day the world is grey and old,
Around me, with the fog and cold A dark night closes.

And I, with thoughts akin to tears,
Travel through many bygone years Marked by your roses.

for blossoms all will soon be done,
My latter days are nearly won For quiet reflection.

And I am tired, and you are sad,
For all the love you might have had, And sweet protection.

But dear, from your November rose
To-night a deeper memory grows, Than a friend's or lover's.

Deep as the knowledge is to be,
When my last slumber carefully The brown earth covers.

A MODEL

YEAR after year I sit for them,
The boys and girls who come and go,
Although my beauty's diadem
Has lain for many seasons low.

When first I came my hair was bright
How hard, they said, to paint its gold,
How difficult to catch the light
Which fell upon it, fold on fold.

How hard to give my happy youth
In all its pride of white and red,
None would believe, in very truth,
A maiden was so fair, they said.

How could they know they gave to me
The daily hope which made me fair,
Sweet promises of things to be,
The happy things I was to share.

The flowers painted round my face,
The magic seas and skies above,
And many a far enchanted place
Full of the summer time and love.

They set me in a fairy-land,
So much more real than they knew,
And I was slow to understand
The pictures could not all come true.

But one by one, they died somehow,
The waking dreams which kept me glad,
And as I sat, they told me now,
None would believe a maid so sad.

They paint me still, but now I sit
Just for my neck and shoulder lines,
And for the little lingering bit
Of colour in my hair that shines.

And as a figure worn and strange
Into their groups I sometimes stray,
To break the light, to mark their range
Of sun and shade, of grave and gay.

And evermore they come and go,

Songs and Other Verses

With life and hope so sweet and high,
In all the world how should they know
There is no one so tired as I!

NEW YEAR CARD.

1892.

GREETING dear friend, through shower and sun,
From me to you, since '91
Is safely buried, dead and done.

And a young year completely new,
Scarcely remarked by me or you,
Stretches before us—'92—

To make or mar in, as may be,
To march through boldly, strong and free,
Or skulk in, until '93.

Ah no, my New Year was not born
Of frost, or flourish of fog-horn,
But of the fairest summer morn,

And stretches onward without end,
Through all the years I have to spend,
Still, greeting all the same dear friend.

Songs and Other Verses

A NOVICE.

Songs and Other Verses

WHAT is it, in these latter days,
Transfigures my domestic ways,
And round me, as a halo, plays? My cigarette.

For me so daintily prepared,
No modern skill, or perfume, spared,
What would have happened had I dared To pass it yet?

What else could lighten times of woe,
When some one says "I told you so,"
When all the servants, in a row, Give notices?

When the great family affairs
Demand the most gigantic cares,
And one is very ill upstairs, With poultices?

What else could ease my aching head,
When, though I long to be in bed,
I settle steadily instead To my "accounts?"

And while the house is slumbering,
Go over them like anything,
And find them ever varying, In their amounts!

Ah yes, the cook may spoil the broth,
The cream of life resolve to froth,
I cannot now, though very wroth, Distracted be;

For as the smoke curls blue and thin
From my own lips, I first begin
To bathe my tired spirit in Philosophy.

And sweetest healing on her pours,
Once more into the world she soars,
And sees it full of open doors, And helping hands.

In spite of those who, knocking, stay
At sullen portals day by day,
And weary at the long delay To their demands.

The promised epoch, like a star,
Shines very bright and very far,
But nothing shall its lustre mar, Though distant yet.

If I, in vain, must sit and wait,
To realize our future state,
I shall not be disconsolate, My cigarette!

FROM THE SUBURBS

IT rushes home, our own express,
So cheerfully, no one would guess The weight it carries

Of tired husbands, back from town,
For each of whom, in festal gown, A fond wife tarries.

For each of whom a better half,
At even, serves the fatted calf, In strange disguises,

At anxious boards of all degree,
Down to the simple "egg at tea," Which love devises.

For whom all day, disconsolate,
Deserted villas have to wait, Detached and Semi—

Barred by their own affairs, which are
As hard to pass through as the far Famed Alpine Gemmi.

Sometimes as I at leisure roam,
Admiring my suburban home, I wonder sadly

If men will always come and go
In these vast numbers, to and fro, So fast and madly.

I muse on what the spell can be,
Which causes this activity: Who of our Sages

The potent charm has meted out
To tall and thin, to short and stout, Of varying ages.

I think, when other fancy flags,
The magic lies within the bags Which journey ever

In silent, black mysterious ways,
With punctual owners, all their days And fail them never.

In some perhaps sweet flowers lie,
Sweet flowers which shape a destiny To pain or pleasure,

Or lady's glove, or ringlet bright,
Or many another keepsake light, Which true knights treasure.

May be—may be—Romance is rife,
Despite our busy bustling life, And rules us gaily,

And shows no sign of weariness,

Songs and Other Verses

But in our very own express, Does travel daily.

FROM OUR EMANCIPATED AUNT IN TOWN.

ALL has befallen as I say,
The old régime has passed away, And quite a new one

Is being fashioned in a fire,
The fervours of whose burning tire And quite undo one.

The fairy prince has passed from sight,
Away into the *ewigkeit*, With best intention

I served him, as you know my dears,
Unflinching through more years Than ladies mention.

And though the fairy prince has gone,
With all the props I leaned upon, And I am stranded,

With old ideals blown away,
And all opinions, in the fray, Long since disbanded.

And though he's only left to me,
Of course quite inadvertently, The faintest glimmer

Of humour, to illumine my way,
I'm thankful he has had his day, His shine and shimmer.

Le roi est mort—but what's to come?—
Surcharged the air is with the hum Of startling changes,

And our great "question" is per force
The vital one, o'er what a course It boldly ranges!

Strange gentlemen to me express
At quiet "at homes" their willingness, To ease our fetters

And ladies, in a fleeting car,
Will tell me that the moderns are My moral betters.

My knees I know are much too weak
To mount the high and shaky peak Of latest ethics,

I'm tabulated, and I stand
By evolution, in a band Of poor pathetics

Who cannot go alone, who cling
To many a worn out tottering thing Of a convention;

To many a prejudice and hope,

Songs and Other Verses

And to the old proverbial rope Of long dimension.

It is to you to whom I look
To beautify our history book, For coming readers,

To you my nieces, who must face
Our right and wrong, and take your place As future leaders.

And I, meanwhile, shall still pursue
All that is weird and wild and new, In song and ballet,

In lecture, drama, verse and prose,
With every cult that comes and goes Your aunt will dally.

A microscopic analyst
Of female hearts, she will subsist On queerest notions,

And subtlest views of maid and wife
Ever engaged in deadly strife With the emotions.

But while you walk, and smile at her,
In quiet lanes, which you prefer To public meetings,

Remember she prepares your way,
With many another Aunt to-day, And send her greetings.