

A Little Book *of Verse*

By Frank M. Comrie



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By

Frank M. Comrie



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CHRISTMAS-TIDE

THE gates of the past swing open wide,
And memories throng at Christmas-tide ;
Joy bells and holly and mistletoe,
Laughter and song and firelight's glow,
The whistling winds and the drifting snow,
And faces of friends we used to know :
Sadness and gladness, with sob and song,
Throng memory's halls the whole day long.
New friends and old friends of long ago
Call cheery greetings across the snow ;
Glad bells are ringing their sweet refrain,
But memory brings a thrill of pain.

A WEE BIT OF HEATHER

AWEE bit of heather
From over the sea —
A spray of white heather
From Scotland to me,
Brings a message of love
From the friends far awa',
And o'er the dear heather
My tears gently fa'.

Oh! the pain's in my heart
And tears fill my eyes,
As o'er the wide ocean
My hame-sick heart flies
To my auld Scottish hame,
Where the hearts still are true,
In the glen far awa'
Where the white heather grew.

VALE AND HAIL

DUST unto dust — the old year dies,
We speed thee on thy way
Like weary pilgrim seeking rest;
We would not bid thee stay.
Toll all ye bells, the passing year,
Its sun sinks in the west;
Turn o'er again the calendar,
And let it go — to rest.

Vale, "Old Year," vale. Hail, "New Year," hail!
Ring out, ye bells on high;
The chimes peal out the midnight hour,
They sadly toll "Good-bye."
Turn o'er again the Book of Life,
A New Year comes to-night,
And on its pages, spotless white,
Thy resolutions write.

SONG OF THE RAIN

UP from the ocean's breast,
 Away up in the sky,
By gentle breeze caressed,
 I float, a cloud on high.
Lazily drifting o'er,
 Free as the summer breeze,
O'er mountain peaks, I soar,
 And kiss the swaying trees.

The sun's fierce rays beat down,
 There comes a cry of pain;
The flowers, sere and brown,
 Are pleading for the rain.
I kiss each fevered face,
 I bathe each dusty leaf;
In each sad heart I place
 A tear, to show my grief.

LULLABY

HUSH-A-BYE, my baby, sleep;
Evening shadows gently creep
'Mid the swaying tree-tops;
In their downy nests
Mother birds are singing
Little ones to rest;
Close your eyes in slumber deep,
Hush-a-bye, my baby, sleep.

Hush-a-bye, my baby, sleep,
While the angels vigil keep;
In the dusky garden,
Snuggled in their beds
All the little flowers
Nod their sleepy heads:
Mother's ever near at hand,
Sail away to Slumberland.

GOD OF THE SEA

GOD of the sea, the earth and the sky,
Hear in Thy mercy, our anguished cry;
The storm-clouds gather, the waves dash high,
And deep in the sea, our loved ones lie.
Stretch forth Thy hand o'er the angry sea,
Calm Thou the waves, bid the lightning flee;
Over the sea, and its mystery,
Send forth Thy angels, to bear to Thee,
The brave who died in the depths of the sea.

Though on Titanic grim death didst reap
A fearful harvest, and sad ones weep,
The God of the sea doth ever keep
His vigils over the heaving deep;
And not a soul, whether base or brave,
E'er sinks to rest in a deep sea grave,
But the God of the sea doth swiftly save;
And though death mocks in its dark sea cave,
There's naught but clay in the empty grave.

Toll, toll, thy bells, ye ships of the deep,
Far down in the depths brave heroes sleep.
Let requiems rise while the nations weep,
And on fame's scroll their memory keep;
Where the phantom ghosts in the thick fog hide
That the weak might live, these brave men died;
But the God of the sea was by their side,
And Heaven's gates were flung open wide
For the brave, who died in the icy tide:
Where the God of the sea doth ever keep
His vigils over the heaving deep.

BIDE AT HAME WITH ME

WHITHER awa', my laddie,
Sae far from the auld Scotch hame?
Why wander sae far awa', lad,
In thy search for wealth and fame?
Though distant lands are calling
Over the trackless sea,
I need you sair at hame, lad,
Sae bide at hame, with me.

I'm getting auld and gray, lad,
And need you by my side;
Sae dinna gang awa', lad,
But here at hame, abide.
I lang to see your bairnies
Creeping across the floor,
I lang to hear them singing
Around the auld hame's door.

There's heartache o'er the sea, lad,
Far off in distant lands;
Your heart will lang for hame, lad,
And the clasp of auld friends' hands.
There's love and peace at hame, lad,
And Mither's by your side;
Sae dinna gang awa', lad,
But here, at hame, abide.

SPIRIT OF THE STORM

THROUGH swaying pines
I whisper and sigh,
With shriek and moan
O'er the mountains fly :
I whistle and whine
At the cabin door,
And lash the sea
To a mighty roar.

I wrap myself
In the robes of night,
And guide my way
By a flash of light :
O'er crag and cliff
In my mad rage leap,
And dash the trees
In a tangled heap.

The thunder's peal
Is my battle-cry,
That shakes the earth
When I sweep the sky :
The lightning's flash
Is my sword of fire,
That swiftly strikes
With vengeance dire.

When my rage is spent
And I long for rest,
I fall asleep
On the ocean's breast :
While the soft winds sing
A sweet lullaby —
To the fleecy clouds
In the azure sky.

AMANG AULD SCOTLAND'S
BRAES

THERE'S nae hame like the hame o' youth,
Nae ither spot sae fair;
Nae ither faces look sae kind,
As the smilin' faces there:
An' I hae sat by mony streams,
Hae travel'd mony ways,
But oh! my sair heart's langin' now
For Bonnie Scotland's braes.

Oh! an' the sun were shinin' now,
An' oh! an' I were there;
Wi' twa, three friends of auld lang syne,
My happiness to share.
Though o'er the hearth of bairnhood's hame
The flocks o' the hills do graze,
Some kind hearts live that love me yet
Amang Auld Scotland's braes.

— *Transposed from poem by Robert Nicoll.*

HE WATCHETH O'ER THEE

THINK ye, the Father on the Great White Throne
Shall fail to hear, and heed, thy bitter cry?
That He doth coldly turn His ear away
When thou dost send thy anguished call on high?
O ye of little faith: the living God
Doth ever hear His children when they pray;
With tender, yearning heart, doth mark their path,
And watcheth o'er them, both by night and day.

Think ye, a son of God can e'er be lost,
Or wander where his Father can not see?
That God Almighty can not bring him back,
And striking off his shackles, set him free?
His eye doth pierce the clouds of darkest night
And follow thee, wherever thou dost roam;
His love enwraps thee like the golden light,
And when He willeth, He shall call thee home.

The task He sets thee may be very hard,
Thy feet may falter in the weary way;
But He is with thee, though thy courage fails,
And watcheth o'er thee, both by night and day.
There's not a sparrow falleth to the ground
Until He cuts the golden thread of life;
Is he not able, then, to keep thee safe —
To guide and guard thee midst thy earthly strife?

SHIPS OF MY HEART

SAIL fairy ships, to the east and west,
Bring me the one that I love best ;
Float far away, on the summer breeze,
Far, far away, o'er the swaying trees.
Spread thy white sails o'er the water blue,
Go tell my love that I am true ;
Tell him I wait, and my heart doth yearn ;
Tell him I pray for his safe return.

Speed fairy ships, to the north and south,
Over the deserts parched with drouth ;
Fly on the wings of the winds that blow
Over the sands and o'er the snow.
Ships of the wind, sail far away,
Go find my love, where'er he stray ;
Over the land and o'er the sea,
Ships of my heart, oh, bring him to me.

PIXIE

DEAR little lassie, with bright golden hair ;
Sweet little girlie, with brown eyes, so fair ;
Fairy wands over the cradle didst waft ;
Fairy wine, surely, thy sweet lips hath quaffed.
Queen of the Fairies, my Pixie, art thou ;
Fairies have crowned thee, their own queen, I vow ;
Fairies have dowered thy dear heart with song ;
Fairies watch o'er thee and shield thee from wrong ;
Fairies shall aid thee, at work or at play ;
Fairies shall guard thee, by night or by day.

— *Written for Margaret Pixley Comrie.*

IT'S A' RICHT

IT'S a' richt with me, laddie,
Though death's dark shadows fall,
For in the hush of twilight
I hear my Master's call.
He walketh close beside me,
And with His loving hand
Shall guide me through the shadows
Into the Promised Land.

Grieve not for me, my ain lad,
God knoweth what is best ;
I'm weary of the way, lad,
And long for peace and rest.
Dinna ye hear the Master
Calling me through the gloam ?
He holds me by the hand, lad,
And He will guide me home.

Though I maun gang awa', lad,
For just a little while,
We soon shall come for thee, lad,
So lift thy head, and smile.
God keep thee brave and true, lad,
Oh promise me, to try
To follow in Christ's footsteps :
Good-bye, my lad, good-bye.

'TWIXT CUP AND LIP

LIFE is a song
When the days are long,
And the summer winds are blowing :
Oh! come with me
Where the winds blow free,
And the river's gently flowing.

Our boat shall glide
Where the black bass hide,
And the " muskies " are a-stirring :
We'll shout with glee
As the lines run free,
And the reels are swiftly whirring.

Cast swift and true
O'er the water blue,
Where the lily pads are floating :
But when bass dash
With a sudden splash
Is not the time for gloating.

'Twixt cup and lip
There's oft a slip,
And catching is not keeping :
So hold on tight,
For a bass will fight,
And often leaves you weeping.

THY HEART'S CITADEL

THE laurel wreath one brow alone can wear,
And those who lose must taste defeat's despair ;
But he is nobler who doth run the race
And bravely strive to win the victor's place
Than he who falters, like a craven slave,
And slinks unhonored to a coward's grave.

Defy thy failures — courage conquers all,
And but the weak beneath their burdens fall.
If thou art steadfast, thou canst never fail ;
It's but the coward who doth flinch and quail
Beneath the cutting stroke of failure's lash :
On to the goal, the strong, with brave hearts, dash.

Each new day dawning from the mists of time,
Gives thee another chance for deeds sublime ;
Forget thy failures and renew the fight,
Success may crown thee, ere the shades of night
Shall fall across thy life's fierce battle-field :
If thy heart's citadel doth never yield.

GOD'S AIN COUNTRIE

WHEN the whisp'ring winds are blowing,
And the river's gently flowing,
E'en though age my step is slowing,
How my old heart starts to glowing;
And I find myself a-wishing,
That I might go off a-fishing;
Where the golden sunshine's streaming,
And the silver water's gleaming —
In God's Ain Countrie.

I can hear the pine trees sighing,
And o'erhead the clouds are flying;
While the forest's aisles are ringing
With the happy birds' sweet singing;
I can see the water flashing,
I can hear the fish a-splashing;
And my aged eyes are beaming
As I sadly sit a-dreaming
Of God's Ain Countrie.

IN THE GREAT WHITE HOUSE

IN the Great White House with its dome of blue,
Where the bird's glad song rings sweet and true,
The tall pines sigh, and rustle and sway,
And Nature calls, "Come out and play."

In the Great White House the zest of life
Frees me awhile from care and strife;
The soft wind sighs through the whispering trees,
And on its wings my trouble flees.

In the Great White House I'm glad and free,
And youth comes back again to me;
The water purls as it ripples by,
And the eagle soars and sways on high.

In the Great White House, when the gates unfold,
The sunlight turns the world to gold,
And I bathe my soul in its golden gleam
As I float along a peaceful stream.

In the Great White House the stars shine bright,
And woodland voices sigh "Good-night";
The stillness falls — the twitterings cease,
And Nature whispers, "Peace, peace,
In the Great White House."



THE TEMPLE OF PEACE

THERE is a temple — its dome is the sky ;
Its pillars — mountains, that tower on high ;
Its nave, majestic, is flooded with light ;
Its mystic altar is gleaming in white ;
Its dome is radiant with purple and gold ;
The flames of the sun its portals enfold ;
Its floor — mosaicked with silver and green —
Stretches far away to the choir screen.

Oh enter ye, then, through the temple gate !
Hasten — oh hasten — lest ye be too late !
To-day thou dost live — to-morrow — who knows —
From whence thy life came or whither it goes ?
Kneel at the altar that towers on high,
Join in the chorus that swells to the sky,
Drink from the fountain that bubbles so clear,
Sweet waters of life that shall sooth thy fear —
In the Temple of Peace.

LET'S GO FISHING!

COME, old man, cast off thy care,
Sunshine's streaming everywhere;
Soft winds sigh through great, tall pines,
Get your tackle — get your lines,
And let's go fishing!

Come on out and have some fun,
Don't forget to bring your gun;
Let your blamed old business drop,
Can't you hear that "muskie" flop?
Oh! let's go fishing!

See! the boats are gliding out!
Can't you hear old Pete Vance shout?
Water's rippling in the sun,
Every one is full of fun!
So, let's go fishing!

Lines are whizzing through the air!
See that "muskie" strike? — right there!
Every nerve is tingling so,
Blood is bounding — all aglow!
Come! let's go fishing!

WHEN GOD STOOPS DOWN

OUT in the forest, 'neath the trees,
Where tall pines sway in whispering breeze;
Out where the oriole sings his song,
And sunshine streams the whole day long,
God stoops down and whispers.

Out in the open, 'neath the sky,
Where stars shine bright far up on high;
Out where the moonbeams gently fall,
And evening's hush is over all,
God stoops down and whispers.

Out on life's highway, drear and brown,
Where wearied men have fallen down;
Whene'er you utter words of cheer,
And help to make one life less drear,
God stoops down and whispers.

AD METAM

(To the Goal)

SON of Comrie: now I charge thee;
Guard thou well thy heritage;
Ever keep thy name unsullied,
From thy youth unto old age.
Though thy way be hard and weary,
Though thy life be sad and drear,
Scorn to be a shrinking coward,
Strive to overcome thy fear.

In life's battle, e'er remember,
Thine own duty to the dead;
Be thou faithful to thy fathers,
O'er whose silent graves ye tread.
Though thy life may bring thee trouble,
Though the Lord may sorrows send,
Thy short day may end to-morrow;
Be thou steadfast to the end.

Though success crown not thy efforts,
And though fame may pass thee by,
Thou canst yet have love and honor
If thou wilt but only try.
There are greater things than power,
Better things than wealth or fame;
Live thou so that men shall honor
And respect thine ancient name.

When death's hand shall touch thy forehead,
When thine own life's sun is set,
Go thou forth to meet thy fathers,
Full of joy and not regret.
Carry thou the name they gave thee,
Free from blemish, spot or blame —
And thy children's children's children
Through the years shall bless thy name.

THE SONG OF LIFE

LIFE'S but a smile — but a dance — but a song ;
Life's but a dream that shall not last long ;
Life's but a moment of keen ecstasy,
Life's but a sail o'er a calm summer sea ;
Life's a queer jangle of joy and of pain,
Only a tangle of sunshine and rain.
Youth, joy and laughter, with eyes all aglow ;
Age, pain and sorrow, when footsteps are slow ;
Goodness and gladness — heart-thrilling madness,
Meanness and badness — heart-breaking sadness,
Sunshine and shadow — vain tears and regret,
Then we all die, and our friends soon "forget."

THE LEGIONS OF GRAY

WITH feeble steps and beating drums,
Out of the past an army comes ;
The boys in blue, and boys in gray,
Shoulder to shoulder march to-day.

Cheers for the blue, tears for the gray,
Who fought in Gettysburg's fierce fray ;
Over the graves of the noble dead
Roses and palms and laurel spread.

There on the field where battle surged,
The blue and gray forever merged ;
And with dim eyes and feet that drag
They march to-day beneath one flag.

Time hath taken their youth away,
The snows of time turned blue to gray ;
And here again on the battle-field
Hand clasps hand, and the wounds are healed.

No battle songs ring out on high,
No chant of war swells to the sky ;
But rank by rank, as they march along,
The legions of gray burst forth in song.

The song they sing is one of peace —
A song that swells when battles cease ;
They sing it o'er and o'er again :
" Peace be on earth ; good will to men."

AMERICA, AWAKEN!

AMERICA, America,
Awaken from thy sleep;
Behold thy land is threatened
With danger from the deep;
For silently but steadily
The alien enters in,
And brings his hate and poverty,
His ignorance and sin.

Go, guard with zeal and vigilance
Thy children from the blight,
Thou hast no room for any one
Who will not do the right;
Who doth not love thy starry flag
And glow with love for thee;
Who hath not, deep within his soul,
A longing to be free.

Thou hast no room for Irishman,
For German or for Swede,
For Slav or Pole or Greek or Jew,
Or any other breed;
Thou callest only those who leave
Their fatherland behind,
And come with loyalty to thee,
A motherland to find.

WASHINGTON

ON the sacred roll of fame
Washington's illustrious name
Shines with majesty sublime
Through the centuries of time.
First in war, and first in peace,
When earth's wars and battles cease,
Thy immortal name shall stand,
Greatest of a noble band.

Thou didst lay thy power down
And refuse a kingly crown,
On thy country's altar light
Freedom's fires, pure and bright.
While the stars their vigils keep
O'er the land where thou dost sleep,
May we e'er be true and brave;
Keep our watch above thy grave.

Time's immortal son art thou,
At thy tomb the nations bow.
May we hear across the years
Thy calm voice, that stills our fears;
When we falter, hear thee say:
"Come, my sons, this is the way!"
May thy spirit guide our land,
Father of our Fatherland.

THE DAYS OF THE LONG AGO

IN the old, old days, when our hearts were young,
And the battle-flags to the breeze were flung;
When the cannon roared o'er hill and vale,
And our hearts stood still and our cheeks were pale:
You were a soldier, so brave and so true,
While I was a nurse, for the boys in blue.

You followed the flag, in the battle's tide —
At the battle's close, I stood by your side;
And over the field, in sunshine and rain,
I served the old flag by easing the pain:
But the sad tears fell, as I went my round,
Of our wounded boys on the blood-soaked ground.

The years have brought us both pleasure and pain,
But the old flag floats, o'er hill and o'er plain;
And through all my tears, and in all my joys,
I've not forgotten my soldier boys.
"Comrade, I greet you, though tears may flow,
For the boys in blue, of the long ago."

CAYADUTTA


DOWN from the mountain's height,
On, I dash to the sea;
Gathering all my might,
In madness to be free.
Onward I rush and leap,
Hastening on my way;
Obeying the call of the deep,
I never pause to play.

Through flowery fields I flow,
Where golden sunshine streams;
Down to the vale below,
Where the silver Mohawk gleams.
Through deep ravines I creep,
In forests' shade I dash;
Then, with a mighty leap,
Over the falls I crash.

"Come, come, come to the sea!"
I hear the far-off cry;
As in glad ecstasy
I hasten swiftly by.
Past busy towns I glide,
Through peaceful valleys flow;
Then with the Mohawk's tide
On, to the sea, I go.

On, on, on — to the sea,
The mighty Mohawk glides;
Hastening to be free,
It joins the Hudson's tides;
And with majestic sweep,
Resistless in its might,
Rushes to meet the deep,
That ripples in the light.

See! I am free at last.
I sparkle in the sun;
Whitecaps go racing past,
O'er the white sand I run;
Tossing my waves on high,
I don my snowy crest;
Under the soft blue sky,
I laugh, and sing, and rest.



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