

IRISH LOVE-SONGS

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Irish Love-Songs by Katharine Tynan

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KATHARINE TYNAN

**IRISH
LOVE-SONGS**

Irish Love-Songs

selected by
KATHARINE TYNAN

Hinkson

CAMEO SERIES



**FISHER UNWIN PATERNOSTER SQ.
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51249

Dedication.



*Take not my love-songs only that are made
Ever for you,
But these more sweet that blew in sun and shade
When all the world was new!*

*Take our wild songs, tender and passionate,
Like those the blackbird sings
Beside some fairy rath, unto his mate,
When all the world hath wings!*

*Take them, and think they speak my happy thought,
My songs of you unsung,
These songs of many lovers, sweetly wrought
When all the world was young!*

APRIL 18, 1892.

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Preface.



AMONG these Irish Love-Songs I have included many that are not direct songs from a lover to the beloved, but are rather songs of Love and the things of Love. I have included also "Dark Rosaleen," the wild and passionate love-song which the genius of Mangan created upon an Irish cry by some bard of Elizabethan days to his distressed Motherland. I keep it because it seems to me the most beautiful poem of our Anglo-Irish literature, and my book would be so much the poorer wanting it; and if any one is dissatisfied with this reason he can figure it to himself a genuine love-song, as one may conceive the Song of Solomon a lover's rhapsody to his Eastern mistress. After "Dark Rosaleen," I believe my little book will owe most to Edward Walsh and Samuel Ferguson, the two men who, above all others, knew how to transfuse the wild simplicity of the Irish songs into English, keeping their strange and lovely flavour as of wild bees' honey—sweet and unsophisticated. The love for pure colour which the Irish possess is in these songs. No one who loves poetry will ask what I mean when I

point to so crystal-clear and crystal-sparkling a verse as Ferguson's—

"O had you seen the Coolun
Walking down by the cuckoo's street,
With the dew of the meadow shining
On her milk-white twinkling feet."

Most of these Irish poems date only about a hundred or a hundred and fifty years back. Some are much older, however, as witness "Beautiful Deirdre," from an Irish MS. of the year 1400; and who shall say that sophisticated nations, holding their Courts of Love and all the rest of the mediæval frippery, could produce more ornate and courtly praise of beauty than this? Poetry in Ireland has a way of rising and falling with revolutions, and there seems no doubt that the Jacobite movement stirred into life the poetry with which the early years of the 18th century in Ireland were rich. They were all Jacobites, those shiftless fellows, who were the lineal descendants of the bards, but, alack! without the bard's position or his protector. Some were labourers, some pedlars, some hedge-schoolmasters, all alike touched with genius, wit, fire and learning—for it was a time when the Irish peasant had the dead languages at his fingers' ends—all alike scamps in a simple and virtuous age, and adding to their scampishness a Voltairean spirit much out of its due time and place. That those exquisite strains of theirs owe much to the genius of Walsh and Ferguson, is shown by the poorer figure they cut when translated by Miss Charlotte Brooke, that first gleaner in the field of Irish song, or by the translators in Hardiman's "Irish Minstrelsy." Those wild songs have a certain family

likeness of manner and metaphor, but to me this cuckoo-note is but an added charm. They did not take kindly to the fine English of their first translators, who would dress them *à la mode*. How delightfully the Irish Muse of the date could prank herself in finery one sees in the lyrics of the Hon. George Ogle and like gentlemen. The "Banks of Banna" has a kinship, to my mind, with the delicate music of Purcell and Arne. I have selected for my little book arbitrarily, and have rejected many who in a larger collection would be honourably represented. I have sometimes rejected, but not always, because of an English influence, having the desire to make a book of Love-Songs of a new flavour, and literary in a fresh way. In this ambition I hope I have succeeded. And in conclusion, with my book, I offer to all English-speaking lovers Greeting!

KATHARINE TYNAN.