

Poems by Dorothy Una Ratcliffe

Dale-Longing

If we could ride at sun-up by a track in Dallow Woods
Just when the world awakens, when flowers wear dewy hoods
And trot thro' nodding grasses, thro' belts of swaying mist
To the music of pineskins in boles of amethyst:
If we could hear the cuckoo down splashy Laver lanes
That are very pleasant going after heavy rains
And find a russet vixen with fluffy cubs at play,
And share with them the glory of a carefree holiday!

And then to ride at noontide, when the sun has power to bless
The bleakest cot and cowhouse with a dower of comeliness;
A sup, a bite, a smile, a chat are ours at any door,
The latest news from market town, tales of the dale-end, or
A lively yarn how Richmond's Tom put up a girt red fox,
The line he took from Azerley across to Brimham Rocks:
'So long, 'a hearty handshake, 'One day ye'll break your necks.'
Then forrard for the heather, to the gurgling of becks.

If we could ride at sundown and hear the grousecock cry
Where wind-hounds speak to all the airts and wind-whelps make reply,
And hear by trysting waterfalls, the lays of water-hobs
Around the emerald course where elfin circus cobs
Are exercised; to see the sun before he sinks, cajole
With ruddy wands, each snaky wall, each thorn-encircled knoll,
And in the hush of gloaming, when sun and young moon greet,
To hear unearthly melodies, fleet and clear and sweet!

If we could ride at nightfall! instead of blazing lines
Of city lights, the broken ranks of broken Dallow pines
Wooing the mystic silence; to see the stars come out
Sparsely at first, and then a spate, later a sparkling rout!
to watch them slowly dying in the gathering cumulus,
Bequeathing all their beauty to the small wild things and us,
And oh! to toast at cock-light in a brew of heather ale,
You and the gypsy April in the heart of a Northern Dale!

T' Lass O' Dallowgill

Ther's girls wi' finer figures
An' girls wi' bonnier hair,
Wi' larger een an' breeter
An' cantier, but I swear
In a' my days I nivver heard
Sae sweet, sae leetsome a voice
As that o' t'lass o' Dallowgill –
I wish I wur her choice!

When wark is done by cockshut
I learn on t'yat; I'se fain
To bear her song in t'loomin':
It's like sunleet seen thro' rain
Or smell o' Whinnybusks i' flower
On runnel-braes i' June;
Even them yaller-yowlings whisht
To hark her lilty tune

A well played fiddle's likesome,
A cello's bad to beat,
A harp is like a suther-wind,
A flute is honey-sweet;
Viewly's a vast of apple-flowers
An' rare is t'blackie's call
But t'voice o' t'lass o' Dallowgill,
Looksta! It beats 'em all!

No Matter Wheer Thoo Wanders

No matter where thoo wanders,
Be 't north, south, east or west,
In hot lands or cold lands,
Thi heart will find no rest
Fra' mine: in far off rivers
Thoo'll hear my Laver call,
Sweet chimings of its hidden bells
Where alders grow sae tall.

Aboon a strange bird's liltin'
Thoo'll dream on a Dallow lark,
Singin' ower moor an' intake
Fra' dawn while t'edge o' dark;
Thoo aims to lose thi sorrow
More'n half a world away,
Yet thowts of me an' Dallow
Thoo niver can nay-say.

When t'lile wind cooms a-whisperin'
An' thi new country blesses,
Thoo'll feel upon thi darlin'eyes
My unforgotten kisses;
An'thro' lang years o' silence
'At Time is slowly takin'
Beneath t'low soughin of world seas
I'll bear thi proud heart breakin'.

Dale Lyric

Thoo doesn't think I luv thee
Tho' I write thee ivery day
Wi' all t'learnin' 'at I have
I'll finnd another way:
I'll borrow pens o' sun an' rain
An' write on t' meadows, while
'I luv thee, Lad, 'is writ in flowers
Aboon high Dallow Stile:
I'll teach them merry, matin' birds,
Whinchat, wagtail, an' starlin',
An' throstle, linnet, lapwing, lark
This lilt, 'I luv thee, Darlin';
Then if thoo still has onny doubt
Whether I luv thee, ---- why
I'll print, 'I LUV THEE' in lile stars
Reet across t'girt sky!

Rake

There's no better dog than Hardcastle's Rake:
Not a hundred guineas would Hardcastle take
 For his walleyed dog; and Ben is a man
 Who takes good money whenever he can,
 But Rake's worth more to him than brass
And Hardcastle loves him more than his lass
Or his bairns: at least so the dalesfolk say:
 And his old lass laughs with:
 "Happen he may;
But t'bairns are fed by a good dog's work
 An' Rake is a cur' at niver 'ull shirk;
 On a winter neet he'll snore on t'hearth
 An' at slightest stir in t'fold or t'garth
He's at our Ben's side; together they'll go
 Out on t'moor in hail or snow,
An' some hours later they'll both come in
 Tired and famished, an' dirty as sin.....
When our Ben goes on his last long trudge
Doon't Valley o' Death, thro' rain an' sludge
 An' gits at last to t'Gowden Gate,
Theer'll be trouble in Heaven if Rake, his mate,
Can't pass; Our Ben 'ull rampage an' shout
 If only saint shuts his sheepdog out;
 If Peter refuses to 'ave him 'By gow'
Theer'll be at yon gate a hell of a row'.

The Shepherd's Funeral

A Lile wind kindly blows today,
They're takin' Dick fra' ower t'way
To Dallow.

Dick 'ud be reet fain
To rest theer, fur he's had a main
O' trouble
He'll be seventy four
Born an' bred on Dallow Moor
A shepherd? Ay! a good one too,
An' he'll be missed by not a few.
Seems such a pity he should go
Just now, but spring cooms varra slow
Into these parts.

Afore he died
He said, "Eh' but I'd like to bide
To listen to a ring ousel sing
An' knaw 'at if wur really spring
To hear t' gowd plover an' lapwing
Calling aboon Beck Meetings Wood
An' just one snipe, by gow! I should
But all my ewes are doin' well
Tho', if late, snows coom, who can tell!
There are two black lambs weakly still"

Today he's laid at Dallowgill,
(Of all t' moors he luv'd Dallow best
An' thowt it a sweet place to rest.)
He niver cared much fur low lands.
Ay! I believe thoo understands,
Fur if thoo's bred alongside heath
Thoo allus luv's it...

About Death,
Dost think around t'breet Courts above
Ther's some intake?
An' dost think, luve,
Ther is some moorland, beyond fields
O' ruby walls, an' sapphire bielts
An' gowden flowers, an' emerald ways,
Wheer a lile tummelling river plays!
An' happen an owd hawthorn tree
Fur folks like Dick an' you an' me!

Luve

Thoo doesn't think I luve thee
Tho' I write thee every day
Wi' all't larnin' 'at I ave!
I'll finnd anuther way
I'll borrow pens of sun an rain
An' write in meadows, while
"I Luve thee, Lad" is writ in flowers
Aboon high Dallow stile.

I'll teach them merry matin' birds,
Win-chat, wag-tail an' starlin'
An' throstle, linnet, lapwing, lark,
This lilt, "I luve thee Darlin'"
Then if thoo still has ony doubt
Whether I luve thee, - then why
I'll print "I LUV THEE" in lile stars
Reet across t' girt sky.

All or Nowt

I didn't know neets could be lonesome
'At day could be too long
'At weeks when thoo wur far fra Dallow
Iverthing would go wrong

I didn't know a lad could alter
Ivery notion I had
'At for him I'd leave my friends, my mother
My home an' my Dad

"All or nowt" is what thoo wanted
An so Heart Luve it mun be,
Even a gowd ring I'd have gi'en up
If thoo'd axed it of me

T' Croodle Beck (For Nod McGrigor Phillips)

I sit aside thee Croodle Beck
Watchin' it waiters flow
At t' bend Wheer t' willows 'at thoo luvud
Stand weepin' in a row;
Nearby ther roots, a waterhen
Has nested, an a blithesome wren
Perks fra an alder. T'warmish sun
Signals 'at May Day has begun.

I sit here dreamin' on my lane
Not caring for t' wrens twitter,
My heart, a boat 'at's rudderless
On't lile waves all-glitter;
T' gay wren chirps on his cheeky sang,
As if naught in t'owd world wur wrang;
A wind wi young leaves is a-laikin'....
An' bonnie things are fair heart-breakin'

I recollect a dozen Springs
'At crowd this last one out,
When Time itsen had gowden wings
An' Life held niver a doubt.
Thi cherry trees are noo a maze
Of petalled snow in t' woodland ways;
Thi beck is mirrorin' blue skies....
Lad dear, nowt luvly really dies!