



## Contents

Poems	I
Songs, Choruses and Concerted Pieces from <i>The Village Coquettes</i> , a Comic Opera (1836)	3
Round	9
Lucy's Song	10
Squire Norton's Song	11
George Edmunds's Song	12
Rose's Song	13
Duet (Flam and Rose)	14
Squire Norton's Song	15
Duet (The Squire and Lucy)	17
Sestet and Chorus	18
Quartet	20
Squire Norton's Song	22
Young Benson's Song	24
Duet (The Squire and Edmunds)	25
Lucy's Song	26
Quintet	28
Lyric from <i>The Lamplighter</i> , a Farce (1838)	29
Duet from <i>The Lamplighter</i>	33
Songs from <i>The Pickwick Papers</i> (1837)	35
The Ivy Green	39
A Christmas Carol	43
Gabriel Grub's Song	47
Romance	51
Political Squibs from <i>The Examiner</i> (1841)	53
The Fine Old English Gentleman	57
The Quack Doctor's Proclamation	60
Subjects for Painters	63

Prologue to Westland Marston's Play	67
<i>The Patrician's Daughter</i> (1842)	
Prologue to <i>The Patrician's Daughter</i>	71
A Word in Season, from <i>The Keepsake</i> (1844)	73
A Word in Season	77
Verses from the <i>Daily News</i> (1846)	79
The British Lion	83
The Hymn of the Wiltshire Labourers	86
New Song, Lines Addressed to Mark Lemon (1849)	89
New Song	93
Wilkie Collins's Play <i>The Lighthouse</i> (1855)	95
The Prologue	99
The Song of the Wreck	101
Prologue to Wilkie Collins's Play <i>The Frozen Deep</i> (1856)	103
Prologue to <i>The Frozen Deep</i>	107
A Child's Hymn from <i>The Wreck of the Golden Mary</i> (1856)	109
A Child's Hymn	113
Note on the Text	115
Notes	115
Extra Material	117
<i>Charles Dickens's Life</i>	119
<i>Charles Dickens's Works</i>	127
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	133



Charles Dickens (1812–70)



## *Poems*



Songs, Choruses and  
Concerted Pieces from  
*The Village Coquettes*,  
a Comic Opera  
1836





About the year 1834, when the earliest of the *Sketches by Boz* were appearing in print, a young composer named John Hullah set to music a portion of an opera called *The Gondolier*, which he thought might prove successful on the stage. Twelve months later Hullah became acquainted with Charles Dickens, whose name was then unknown to those outside his own immediate circle, and it occurred to him that he and “Boz” might combine their forces by converting *The Gondolier* into a popular play. Dickens, who always entertained a passion for the theatre, entered into the project at once, and informed Hullah that he had a little unpublished story by him which he thought would dramatize well – even better than *The Gondolier* notion; confessing that he would rather deal with familiar English scenes than with the unfamiliar Venetian environment of the play favoured by Hullah. The title of *The Gondolier* was consequently abandoned, and a novel subject found and put forward as *The Village Coquettes*, a comic opera of which songs, duets and concerted pieces were to form constituent parts. Dickens, of course, became responsible for the libretto and Hullah for the music; and when completed the little play was offered to, and accepted by, Braham, the lessee of the St James’s Theatre, who expressed an earnest desire to be the first to introduce “Boz” to the public as a dramatic writer. A favourite comedian of that day, John Pritt Harley, after reading the words of the opera prior to its representation, declared it was “a sure card” and felt so confident of its success that he offered to wager ten pounds that it would run fifty nights! – an assurance which at once decided Braham to produce it.

*The Village Coquettes*, described on the title page of the printed copies as “A Comic Opera, in Two Acts”, was played for the first time on 6th December 1836, with Braham and Harley in the cast. In his preface to the play (published contemporaneously by Richard Bentley, and dedicated to Harley) Dickens explained that “the libretto of an opera must be, to a certain extent, a mere vehicle for the music”, and that “it is scarcely fair or reasonable to judge it by those strict rules of criticism which would be justly applicable to a five-act tragedy or a finished comedy”. There is no doubt that the merits of the play were based upon the songs set to Hullah’s music rather than upon the play itself, and it is said that Harley’s reputation as a vocalist was established by his able rendering of them.

*The Village Coquettes* enjoyed a run of nineteen nights in London during the season, and was then transferred to Edinburgh, where it was performed under the management of Mr Ramsay, a friend of Sir Walter Scott. Sala, as a boy of ten, witnessed its first representation in London, and ever retained a vivid impression of the event; while especial interest appertains to the fact that a copy of the play became the means of first bringing Dickens into personal communication with John Forster, his lifelong friend and biographer. It is more than probable that “Boz” felt a little elated by the reception accorded by the public to the “dramatic bantling” but as time progressed he realized that the somewhat unfavourable comments of the critics were not entirely devoid of truth. Indeed, when in 1843 it was proposed to revive the play, he expressed a hope that it might be allowed “to sink into its native obscurity”. “I did it,” he explained, “in a fit of damnable good nature long ago, for Hullah, who wrote some very pretty music to it. I just put down for everybody

what everybody at the St James's Theatre wanted to say and do, and what they could say and do best, and I have been most sincerely repentant ever since." The novelist confessed that both the operetta and a little farce called *The Strange Gentleman* (the latter written as "a practical joke" for the St James's Theatre about the same time) were done "without the least consideration or regard to reputation"; he also declared that he "wouldn't repeat them for a thousand pounds apiece", and devoutly wished these early dramatic efforts to be forgotten. Apropos of this, the late Frederick Locker-Lampson has recorded that when he asked Dickens (about a year before the great writer's death) whether he possessed a copy of *The Village Coquettes*, his reply was "No; and if I knew it was in my house, and if I could not get rid of it in any other way, I would burn the wing of the house where it was!"

Although, perhaps, not of a high order of merit, *The Village Coquettes* is not without bibliographical interest, and may be regarded as a musical and literary curiosity. Copies of the first edition of the little play are now seldom met with, and whenever a perfect impression comes into the market it commands a good price, even as much as ten or twelve pounds – indeed, a particularly fine copy was sold at Sotheby's in 1889 for twenty-five pounds. In 1878 the words of the opera were reprinted in facsimile by Richard Bentley, for which a frontispiece was etched by F.W. Pailthorpe a year later.



## Round

Hail to the merry autumn days, when yellow cornfields shine,  
Far brighter than the costly cup that holds the monarch's wine!  
Hail to the merry harvest time, the gayest of the year,  
The time of rich and bounteous crops, rejoicing and good cheer!

'Tis pleasant on a fine spring morn to see the buds expand,  
'Tis pleasant in the summertime to view the teeming land;  
'Tis pleasant on a winter's night to crouch around the blaze –  
But what are joys like these, my boys, to autumn's merry days!

Then hail to merry autumn days, when yellow cornfields shine,  
Far brighter than the costly cup that holds the monarch's wine!  
And hail to merry harvest time, the gayest of the year,  
The time of rich and bounteous crops, rejoicing and good cheer!

## Lucy's Song

Love is not a feeling to pass away,  
Like the balmy breath of a summer day;  
It is not – it cannot be – laid aside;  
It is not a thing to forget or hide.  
It clings to the heart, ah, woe is me!  
As the ivy clings to the old oak tree.

Love is not a passion of earthly mould,  
As a thirst for honour, or fame, or gold;  
For when all these wishes have died away,  
The deep, strong love of a brighter day,  
Though nourished in secret, consumes the more,  
As the slow rust eats to the iron's core.

## Squire Norton's Song

That very wise head, old Aesop, said,  
The bow should be sometimes loose;  
Keep it tight for ever, the string you sever –  
Let's turn his old moral to use.  
The world forget, and let us yet,  
The glass our spirits buoying,  
Revel tonight in those moments bright  
Which make life worth enjoying.

CHORUS – The cares of the day, old moralists say,  
Are quite enough to perplex one;  
Then drive today's sorrow away till tomorrow,  
And then put it off till the next one.

Some plodding old crones – the heartless drones!  
Appeal to my cool reflection,  
And ask me whether such nights can ever  
Charm sober recollection.  
Yes, yes! I cry, I'll grieve and die,  
When those I love forsake me;  
But while friends so dear surround me here,  
Let Care, if he can, o'ertake me.

CHORUS – The cares of the day, etc.



## George Edmunds's Song

Autumn leaves, autumn leaves, lie strewn around me here;  
Autumn leaves, autumn leaves, how sad, how cold, how drear!

How like the hopes of childhood's day,  
Thick clust'ring on the bough!  
How like those hopes in their decay –  
How faded are they now!

Autumn leaves, autumn leaves, lie strewn around me here;  
Autumn leaves, autumn leaves, how sad, how cold, how drear!

Wither'd leaves, wither'd leaves, that fly before the gale:  
Withered leaves, withered leaves, ye tell a mournful tale,  
Of love once true, and friends once kind,  
And happy moments fled:  
Dispersed by every breath of wind,  
Forgotten, changed or dead!

Autumn leaves, autumn leaves, lie strewn around me here!  
Autumn leaves, autumn leaves, how sad, how cold, how drear!

## Rose's Song

Some folks who have grown old and sour,  
Say love does nothing but annoy.

    The fact is, they have had their hour,  
So envy what they can't enjoy.

I like the glance – I like the sigh –

    That does of ardent passion tell!  
If some folks were as young as I,  
    I'm sure they'd like it quite as well.

Old maiden aunts so hate the men,

    So well know how wives are harried,  
It makes them sad – not jealous – when

    They see their poor, dear nieces married.

All men are fair and false, they know,

    And with deep sighs they assail 'em;  
It's so long since they tried men, though,  
    I rather think their mem'ries fail 'em.

## ALMA CLASSICS

ALMA CLASSICS aims to publish mainstream and lesser-known European classics in an innovative and striking way, while employing the highest editorial and production standards. By way of a unique approach the range offers much more, both visually and textually, than readers have come to expect from contemporary classics publishing.

### LATEST TITLES PUBLISHED BY ALMA CLASSICS

- 286 Stefan Zweig, *A Game of Chess and Other Stories*
- 287 Antal Szerb, *Journey by Moonlight*
- 288 Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Books*
- 289 Anna Sewell, *Black Beauty*
- 290 Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*
- 291 Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Night Flight*
- 292 Ivan Turgenev, *A Nest of the Gentry*
- 293 Cécile Aubry, *Belle and Sébastien: The Child of the Mountains*
- 294 Saki, *Gabriel-Ernest and Other Stories*
- 295 E. Nesbit, *The Railway Children*
- 296 Susan Coolidge, *What Katy Did*
- 297 William Shakespeare, *Sonnets*
- 298 Oscar Wilde, *The Canterville Ghost and Other Stories*
- 299 Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*
- 300 Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Stories*
- 301 Jerome K. Jerome, *After-Supper Ghost Stories*
- 302 Thomas More, *Utopia*
- 303 H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine*
- 304 Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Souls*
- 305 H.G. Wells, *The Invisible Man*
- 306 Thomas Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*
- 307 Ivan Turgenev, *On the Eve*
- 308 Frances Hodgson Burnett, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*
- 309 E. Nesbit, *Five Children and It*
- 310 Rudyard Kipling, *Just So Stories*
- 311 Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*
- 312 L.M. Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*
- 313 Eleanor H. Porter, *Pollyanna*
- 314 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Devils*
- 315 John Buchan, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*
- 316 H.G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*
- 317 Dante Alighieri, *Paradise*

