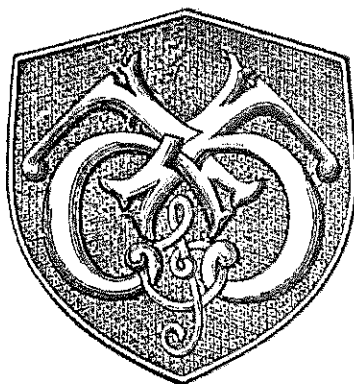


# BALLADS, LYRICS, AND HYMNS.

BY

ALICE CARY.

POPULAR EDITION.



NEW YORK:  
PUBLISHED BY HURD AND HOUGHTON  
Cambridge: Riverside Press.  
1876.

---

LIBRARY  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
DAVIS

## THE WASHERWOMAN.

At the north end of our village stands,  
With gable black and high,  
A weather-beaten house, — I 've stopt  
Often as I went by,

To see the strip of bleaching grass  
Slipped brightly in between  
The long straight rows of hollyhocks,  
And current-bushes green ;

The clumsy bench beside the door,  
And oaken washing-tub,  
Where poor old Rachel used to stand,  
And rub, and rub, and rub !

Her blue-checked apron speckled with  
The suds, so snowy white ;  
From morning when I went to school  
Till I went home at night,

She never took her sunburnt arms  
Out of the steaming tub :  
We used to say 't was weary work  
Only to hear her rub.

---

With sleeves stretched straight upon the grass  
The washed shirts used to lie ;  
By dozens I have counted them  
Some days, as I went by.

The burly blacksmith, battering at  
His red-hot iron bands,  
Would make a joke of wishing that  
He had old Rachel's hands !

And when the sharp and ringing strokes  
Had doubled up his shoe,  
As crooked as old Rachel's back,  
He used to say 't would do.

And every village housewife, with  
A conscience clear and light,  
Would send for her to come and wash  
An hour or two at night !

Her hair beneath her cotton cap  
Grew silver-white and thin ;  
And the deep furrows in her face  
Ploughed all the roses in.

Yet patiently she kept at work, —  
We school-girls used to say  
The smile 'about her sunken mouth  
Would quite go out some day.

---

Nobody ever thought the spark  
That in her sad eyes shone,  
Burned outward from a living soul  
Immortal as their own.

And though a tender flush sometimes  
Into her cheek would start,  
Nobody dreamed old Rachel had  
A woman's loving heart!

At last she left her heaps of clothes  
One quiet autumn day,  
And stript from off her sunburnt arms  
The weary suds away;

That night within her moonlit door  
She sat alone, — her chin  
Sunk in her hand, — her eyes shut up,  
As if to look within.

Her face uplifted to the star  
That stood so sweet and low  
Against old crazy Peter's house —  
(He loved her long ago!)

Her heart had worn her body to  
A handful of poor dust, —  
Her soul was gone to be arrayed  
In marriage-ropes, I trust.