

A Ballad of Victory

By Dollie Radford

WITH quiet step and gentle face,
With tattered cloak, and empty hands,
She came into the market place,
A traveller from many lands.

And by the costly merchandise,
Where people thronged in eager quest,
She paused awhile, with patient eyes,
And begged a little space for rest.

And where the fairest blossoms lay,
And where the rarest fruits were sent
From earth's abundant store, that day,
She turned and smiled in her content.

And where the meagre stall was bare,
Where no exultant voice was heard,
Beside the barren basket, there
She stayed to say her sweetest word.

Around

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Around her all the people came,
 Drawn by the magic of her speech,
To learn the music of her name,
 And whose the country she would reach.

She looked upon them, as she stood,
 Until her eyes were full of tears,
She said "My way is fair and good,
 And good my service to the years."

When for her beauty men besought
 To ease the sadness at her heart,
She murmured "You can give me nought
 But space to rest, ere I depart."

When for her tender healing ways,
 The women begged her love again,
She answered "In these bounteous days
 I may not let my love remain."

And when the children touched her hair,
 And put their hands about her face,
She sighed "There is so much to share,
 I well might bide a little space."

But ere the shadows longer grew,
 Or up the sky the evening stole,
She took the lonely way she knew,
 And journeyed onward to her goal.

She

She turned away with steadfast air,
From all their choice of fair and sweet,
And as she turned they saw how bare
And bruised were her pilgrim feet.

Through many a rent and tattered fold,
As she went forward on her quest,
They saw the big wounds, deep and old,
The cruel scars upon her breast.

They called to her to wait, to learn
How they would cure her pain, to dwell
With them awhile; she did but turn
And wave her smiling last farewell.

And in their midst a woman rose,
And said "I do not know her name,
Nor whose the land to which she goes,
But well the roads by which she came.

"Among the lonely hills they lie,
Beyond the town's protecting wall,
Where travellers may faint and die,
And no one hearken when they call.

"Far up the barren heights they go,
Worn ever deeper night and day,
By toiling feet, and tears that flow
For some sweet flower to mark the way.

"And

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“ And down the stony slopes they lead,
Through many a deep and dark ravine,
Where long ago it was decreed
Nor sun nor moonlight should be seen.

“ Across the waste where no help is,
And through the winds and blinding showers,
Among the mist-bound silences,
And through the cold despairing hours.

“ Among the lonely, lonely hills,
Ah me, I do not know her name,
Nor whose the bidding she fulfils,
But well the roads by which she came.”

Then spoke a youth, who long, apart,
Had watched the people come and go,
With clearer eyes and wiser heart,
And cried, “ Her face and name I know.

“ And well the passage of her flight,
The starless plains she must ascend,
And well the darkness of the night,
In which her pilgrimage shall end.

“ But stronger than the years that roll,
Than travail past, or yet to be,
She presses to her hidden goal,
A crownless, unknown Victory.”