

Rock Me to Sleep

BACKWARD, turn backward, O Time, in your flight,
Make me a child again just for to-night!
Mother, come back from the echoless shore,
Take me again to your heart as of yore;
Kiss from my forehead the furrows of care,
Smooth the few silver threads out of my hair;
Over my slumbers your loving watch keep; —
Rock me to sleep, mother, — rock me to sleep!

Backward, flow backward, O tide of the years!
I am so weary of toil and of tears, —
Toil without recompense, tears all in vain, —
Take them, and give me my childhood again!
I have grown weary of dust and decay, —
Weary of flinging my soul-wealth away;
Weary of sowing for others to reap; —
Rock me to sleep, mother, — rock me to sleep!

Tired of the hollow, the base, the untrue,
Mother, O mother, my heart calls for you!
Many a summer the grass has grown green,
Blossomed and faded, our faces between:
Yet, with strong yearning and passionate pain,
Long I to-night for your presence again.
Come from the silence so long and so deep; —
Rock me to sleep, mother, — rock me to sleep!

Over my heart, in the days that are flown,
No love like mother-love ever has shone;
No other worship abides and endures, —
Faithful, unselfish, and patient like yours:
None like a mother can charm away pain
From the sick soul and the world-weary brain.
Slumber's soft calms o'er my heavy lids creep; —
Rock me to sleep, mother, — rock me to sleep!

Come, let your brown hair, just lighted with gold,
Fall on your shoulders again as of old;
Let it drop over my forehead to-night,
Shading my faint eyes away from the light;
For with its sunny-edged shadows once more
Haply will throng the sweet visions of yore;
Lovingly, softly, its bright billows sweep;
Rock me to sleep, mother, — rock me to sleep!

Mother, dear mother, the years have been long
 Since I last listened your lullaby song:
 Sing, then, and unto my soul it shall seem
Womanhood's years have been only a dream.
 Clasped to your heart in a loving embrace,
 With your light lashes just sweeping my face,
 Never hereafter to wake or to weep; —
Rock me to sleep, mother, — rock me to sleep!

Elizabeth Akers Allen 1866

Maud Muller

Maud Muller on a summer's day
Raked the meadow sweet with hay.

Beneath her torn hat glowed the wealth
Of simple beauty and rustic health.

Singing, she wrought, and her merry glee
The mock-bird echoed from his tree.

But when she glanced to the far-off town
White from its hill-slope looking down,

The sweet song died, and a vague unrest
And a nameless longing filled her breast,-

A wish that she hardly dared to own,
For something better than she had known.

The Judge rode slowly down the lane,
Smoothing his horse's chestnut mane.

He drew his bridle in the shade
Of the apple-trees, to greet the maid,

And asked a draught from the spring that flowed
Through the meadow across the road.

She stooped where the cool spring bubbled up,
And filled for him her small tin cup,

And blushed as she gave it, looking down
On her feet so bare, and her tattered gown.

"Thanks!" said the Judge; "a sweeter draught
From a fairer hand was never quaffed."

He spoke of the grass and flowers and trees,
Of the singing birds and the humming bees;

Then talked of the haying, and wondered whether
The cloud in the west would bring foul weather.

And Maud forgot her brier-torn gown
And her graceful ankles bare and brown;

And listened, while a pleased surprise
Looked from her long-lashed hazel eyes.

At last, like one who for delay
Seeks a vain excuse, he rode away.

Maud Muller looked and sighed: "Ah me!
That I the Judge's bride might be!

"He would dress me up in silks so fine,
And praise and toast me at his wine.

"My father should wear a broadcloth coat;
My brother should sail a pointed boat.

"I'd dress my mother so grand and gay,
And the baby should have a new toy each day.

"And I'd feed the hungry and clothe the poor,
And all should bless me who left our door."

The Judge looked back as he climbed the hill,
And saw Maud Muller standing still.

"A form more fair, a face more sweet,
Ne'er hath it been my lot to meet.

"And her modest answer and graceful air
Show her wise and good as she is fair.

"Would she were mine, and I to-day,
Like her, a harvester of hay.

"No doubtful balance of rights and wrongs,
Nor weary lawyers with endless tongues,

"But low of cattle and song of birds,
And health and quiet and loving words."

But he thought of his sisters, proud and cold,
And his mother, vain of her rank and gold.

So, closing his heart, the Judge rode on,
And Maud was left in the field alone.

But the lawyers smiled that afternoon,
When he hummed in court an old love-tune;

And the young girl mused beside the well
Till the rain on the unraked clover fell.

He wedded a wife of richest dower,
Who lived for fashion, as he for power.

Yet oft, in his marble hearth's bright glow,
He watched a picture come and go;

And sweet Maud Muller's hazel eyes
Looked out in their innocent surprise.

Oft, when the wine in his glass was red,
He longed for the wayside well instead;

And closed his eyes on his garnished rooms
To dream of meadows and clover-blooms.

And the proud man sighed, and with a secret pain,
"Ah, that I were free again!

"Free as when I rode that day,
Where the barefoot maiden raked her hay."

She wedded a man unlearned and poor,
And many children played round her door.

But care and sorrow, and childbirth pain,
Left their traces on heart and brain.

And oft, when the summer sun shone hot
On the new-mown hay in the meadow lot,

And she heard the little spring brook fall
Over the roadside, through a wall,

In the shade of the apple-tree again
She saw a rider draw his rein;

And, gazing down with timid grace,
She felt his pleased eyes read her face.

Sometimes her narrow kitchen walls
Stretched away into stately halls;

The weary wheel to a spinet turned,
The tallow candle an astral burned,

And for him who sat by the chimney lug,
Dozing and grumbling o'er pipe and mug,

A manly form at her side she saw,
And joy was duty and love was law.

Then she took up her burden of life again,
Saying only, "It might have been."

Alas for the maiden, alas for the Judge,
For rich repiner and household drudge!

God pity them both and pity us all,
Who vainly the dreams of youth recall.

For of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: "It might have been!"

Ah, well! for us all some sweet hope lies
Deeply buried from human eyes;

And, in the hereafter, angels may
Roll the stone from its grave away!

John Greenleaf Whittier 1854

NOTES

In 1941 Jerome Williams published a collection of his poetry. Among the six poems in Scandinavian dialect were parodies of "Rock Me To Sleep" and "Maud Muller". "The Beautiful Snow" appeared in George T. Springer's *Yumpin' Yimminy* in 1932.

*Ole and Jillie Olson
and
Maud Muller Parodies

Original Poems*

A collection of parodies and original poems written by the author over a period of forty years, while he was editor of The Livingston Enterprise, Livingston, Montana, and later of The Big Timber Pioneer.

Printed February 1941



JEROME WILLIAMS

Tillie Olson's Leap Year Prayer

Bakvard, turn bakvard, O Time en yur flight!
Mak me eighteen agan, yoost fer tunight.
Beauty, com bak from der ekoles shor:
Tak me agan en yur arms es ov yor.
Smooth out der vrinkles; briten der eyes;
Shuv bak der sheek yowls; cut down der syz;
Mak me a maiden yoost varin long clos;
Fer yumpin by yiminy, how Ay long to propos.

Brang me a dress vid bangles and flaps;
Cover my ears vid de nu "cootie traps;"
Also a turban tu poot on der hed;
Shoos fer de feet ov de latest bright red;
Sheeks dat ar rosy, teeth good and vight;
Corsets vid laces tu hol me so tight.
Den sho me a man, huaver yu meet;
An Ay'll shas him all over tel he fine a nu street.

Ay ban so lonsom fer forty od years;
Ay ban a gurl hu shed lots ov tears.
Tillie hev shans ven har go tu school,
But har ban no vise an mak a dam fool.
Har hed von svethart, Ole by name;
An Ole ban good and laik de luv game.
But Tillie ban fulish, laik oder gurls du,
An tel Ole to horry an mak a skadu.

Den Yimmy, anoder, he luv awful nice;
An Tillie's hed gro and svel up vons er twice:
An Yimmy get mad an rais leetle row;
An Tillie ban lonsom from den untel now.
No oder com long hu vant a nice vife;
So Tillie ban goin alon all her life.
Har ban purty sorry, an vant a nice man;
Har tak him an luv him as much as har can.

Den bakvard, turn bakvard, O Time en yur flight;
Mak me eighteen agan, yoost fer tonight;
Gev me der pep vat oder gurls no;
Fine me a man an gev me von sho.
Ogly er purty, leetle er tall,
Tillie vel luv him, sol, body an all.
Gev har von shans agan, gev har von shans;
Fer any ting soot har if he only vars pants.

Ole Olson's Thanksgiving Prayer

Bakvard, turn bakvard, O Time en yur flight!
Gev me a turkey, ples, yust fer tunite.
Das ban a yer ven times ban so tite
Dat Ole ban nerly nocked out vid a frite.

Das ban a yer ven evryting slump,
An de hard vurken man ban only a shump.
Not even a dollar tu by him som snoos;
An Rev. Yo Pope dun shut off de boos.

An vete ban a dropen from day unto day;
An nobody vant tu by eny hay;
An taxes ban climen cler op out of site;
An muny no ever ban clos an so tite.

An ven Ole tank he go herden agan,
He fine dat de shepe don need eny man;
An ven he ask ralrod tu vurk vid de pick
He fine dat de yob ban grabed by a Mick.

He tak en de horses tu rase a nete sum,
But de yitney dun put al horses on bum.
Hees Tillie ban vurken her hed dam ner off.
An al dat she get ban veke lungs an a coff.

De shildern ban shivern op clos to de range;
An al dat dey get ban scurvy an mange;
Der clos hev no fixen fur mor dan a yere,
Becos al de trimens ban hi an so dere.

De groser he vant yu tu put op de mon;
De butcher he say he no liven fer fun;
De banker he gev yu a vink an a grin,
An ven yu get tru yu ban al taken in.

Den bakvard, turn bakvard, O Time en yur flight!
Gev me a turkey, ples, yust fer tunite.
An den get som munshin tu mak me fele vel,
An de rest ov de vurld ken al go tu hel.

Ole Olson's Leap Year Prayer

Forward, turn forward, O Time en yur flight!
Mak me von hunderd, ples, yoost fer tunight.
Dis ban a lep year, an Ole ban fraid
He ban goin' tu be grabbed by an ogly old maid.

Dis ban a month vid days twenty-nine
An evry ol maid har ban feelin' so fine,
Har tank har hev lisens tu hunt op a man
An shas him and cach him veraver har can.

Har blacken der eybros, an curl op der hair,
An powder der neck veraver ets bare.
Har skrub off der fengers an polish der nails,
An buy a nu coat vid two or tree tails.

Har skurt ban a short von, to sho der bright hos;
Et ban a long vay from ets end tu har tos;
Har tak beladonner tu briten der eys;
An pul at der corset tu cut down der siz.

An ven har meet Ole, becos ets lep year,
Har grin laik a monkey cler bak tu har ear.
But Ole ban vise; he no lost eny Yane;
He ban stung purty hard, but he no ban again.

He vons had a sweetie — Tillie dey say —
An Tillie ban cute an get purty gay.
Har led Ole on, den gev him a fall;
An Ole's now cussin not von but dem all.

Den forward, turn forward, O Time en yu flight!
Mak me von hunderd, ples, yoost fer tunight;
Gev me vite veeskers dat reach tu de groun;
Mak me a skarcro ven de Yanes com aroun.

Mak me bolegged, an not wery hi;
Poot varts on my nose, an a cross en der ey;
Mak me a creepel, vid crutches or canes;
Du enyting, ples, tu skar off der Yanes.

Maude Muller And Ole

Maud Muller on a summer's day
Raked the meadow, sweet with hay.

The sun was hot; so was Maud
Whose only wish was, "Oh, My Gawd!

Why don't some man who wants a wife
Come buzzing by, take me for life?

And as Maud raked and father mowed
A cloud of dust came down the road.

Ten thousand clattering, tiny feet,
And many a weary, plaintive bleat

Came drifting, down the hill, so steep —
'Twas Ole Olson and his sheep.

"Hallo, Mees Maud!" as he crossed the yard —
"Yu tank yu ban a vorkin hard?"

"Oh no," said Maud, "this is play!
All you do is rake the hay;

Gather it up in ricks, so wide,
And cuss a little on the side;

Bend your back 'til your corset rips,
And your backbone aches from neck to hips.

Why, Ole dear, you foolish boy,
This is the only real, true joy."

"Vell, Ay ban tankin," Ole said,
As he stopped to scratch his big tow head,

"Dat Ole ban a goin to tak
A vooman who vas used to rak.

Har mak him von good vorkin vyfe
An poot some yoy in Ole's lyfe.

Har soon skal know each leetle treek
An tend de sheep ven Ole seek.

An ven he go tu pay his beels
Har tak de voolies tu de heels.

Har cook de grub, an vash de clos.
An feed de creeples ven it snos.

An ven de leetle Oles com
Beeg Ole know he ban goin som.

An so, Mees Maud, you drop de rak,
Fer Ole yu ban goin tu tak."

But at the thought our Maud rebelled
And raising her rake, loudly yelled:

"Beat it, you mutt! You sheep camp stew!
Your sheep smell bad, and so do you.

Hike for that hill, up there, you see?
Before you get your ticks on me."

Ole looked back as he climbed the hill
And saw Maud Muller standing still.

And as he rubbed his throbbing head
Turned to his sheep and fiercely said:

"Ov all sure words ov tung or pen
Ay bust har dam head har say it agen."

Ole Olson's New Year

Vel, gude mornen, Maister Nu Yer! An how yu ban tuday?
Ay tank yu luken bully; ban yu felen perty gay?
Ay spos yu luk fer Ole, tu se ef he ban ner
An mak de resolushen fer de comen ov das yer?
Vel, Ay tel yu, Maister Nu Yer, en de days dat hev gon by
Ole ban som gude ol sport hemself: an al de games he try;
But yu no, es vel es he du, dat dos days now don pas by;
An de law don op an fex et so ve al ban gude an dry.
Al de resolushens dat ve mad, tu brak ven ve hed sho,
Ban fexed a gude an plenty by our ol fren, "Rev. Yo."
An ay tel yu, Maister Nu Yer, vat dey cal de ol "blu laws"
Ban soon a goen tu grab us al, viden der iron claws.
Ay vas reden in de papper, yust a day er so ago,
How der vurld vil turn cler enside out viden a yer er so;
How das guy dey cal "Blu Sunday" — huaver he may be —
Es goen tu pedel lots ov dope fer de use ov yu an me.
Et say ef Ole vant a ride ven Sunday com agan,
By Yosh! he no vil tak et, fer der'l be no Sunday tran.
An ef he vant tu tak a trip out en de cuntry far,
By Yorge! he no ken get et on der entererben car.
An den de beeg bas bal park, an al de movie sho
Vil al be closed on Sunday, es en days ov long ago.
An ef he vant a col ice crem, tu cool hes dried op troat,
He vil hev to vate tel Monday, sens de vimmen hev a wote.
An Ay se dat von Mees Gaston, de beeg bos suferget,
Tel Harding tu get busy and cut out de cegetet.
An Ay se dat ol Bil Bryan — hu ban medlen al hes life —
Vil stop a man from leven vid hes own an lawful vife.
So Ay don no bout de shildern — hu gadder roun our nees —
But Ay spos he tank ve get dem frum de bushes an de trees.
An Ay vant tu tel Bil Bryan, vid his dope an ol blu laws —
Dat ol Adam vas a batter man dan he es or aver vas;
An dat ol Eve, de vuman, ov hoom ve al hev red —
Vil still hev meny vimmen frens ven Bryan's gon an ded.
So Maister Satan, Maister Stork, an Maister Nu Yer, tu,
Yu batter al get busy an fine somteng els tu du;
Fer ven de blu laws com agan — an der gatten perty ner —
Ve'l hev no hel, no babbies, an no sveren off Nu Yer.

The Beautiful Snow

O de sno, de terebel sno,
Bloen an dreften veraver yu go!
Over de howstops, over de strete,
Pelten de heds ov de pepul yu mete.
Cutten de sken on a fare lady's sheke;
Craken har leps en a froleksun freke.
Svelen har lungs tel der redy tu bust;
Filen har eys an har eres vid de dust.
Terebel sno, et don mene eny harm
But ve're al ruslen hard tu kepe gude an varm.

Ay vons red a pome of a por gurl hu fel
Yust laik a sno flak, from heven tu hel
Har sed har vas col, an no plas tu go;
So har lay down an dy en de "butiful sno."
Now das gurl har lived about sixty-tre
Et a time ven gurls vas laik al gurls shud be.
Ef har hed a lived laik gurls liv tудay
Der mite hev ben cos fer har pasen away.
But ay no figer out vy das gurl shud dy
Ven al de varm clos vas so shepe an nere by.

Den gurls vor red flannels — tu pieces en al —
Dey got from de trunk ven de sno start tu fal.
Dey hev de beeg shus, vid copers on tos;
An moder tak yarn an mak de vite hos.
Dey hev a beeg hude dat com over de ere,
An a beeg hevy skarf dat hang purty nere.
Der skirts ban de varmest dat moder cud mak,
An de shimmy tu hevy fer dansers tu shak.
An a beeg vulen dress, mad op purty nete,
Ban covered by cote cler down tu de fete.

Den vy das sno, das terebel sno,
Filen de sky an de ert belo?
Shasen, lafen, yoshen by,
Et rufens de fase an vaters de ey.
An even de dogs, vid a bark an a boun,
Hike bak fer de hows, vid der tales tu de groun.
Terebel sno, et du lots ov harm
Becos al de Yanes vont dres gude an varm.
De vay dey dres now dey cach de ol flu,
Den turn op der tos an mak a skadu.

"Dusting Off The Old Ones"

TILLIE OLSON'S LEAP YEAR PRAYER

(Pioneer files, January, 1920)

Bakvard, turn bakvard, O Time en yur flite!
Mak me 18 agan, yoost fer tunite.
Beauty, cum bak from der ekoles shor;
Tak me agan en yur arms es uv yor;
Smooth out der vrinkles; briten der eyes;
Shuv bak der sheek yowls; cut down der size;
Make me a maiden yoost varin long clos,
Fer, yumpin by yimminy, how ay long tu propos.

Breng me a dress vid bangles an flaps;
Cover my ears vid de new "cootie traps;"
Also a turban tu poot on der hed;
Shoos fer de feet uv de latest brite red.
Sheeks dat ar rosy; teeth gude an vite;
Corsets vid laces tu hol me so tite.
Den sho me a man, whoever yu meet,
An ay'll shase him al over tel ay fine a nu street.

Ay ban so lonsom fer 40 odd years;
Ay ban a gurl who shed lots o' tears.
Tillie hev shans ven her go tu school,
But her ban no vise an mak a dam fool.
Her hed von svethart, Ole by name,
An Ole ban gude an laik de luv game.
But Tillie ban foolish, es oder gurls du,
An tel Ole tu hurry an mak a skadu.

Den Yimmy, anoder, he luv awful nice,
An Tillie's hed grow an svel up vons er twice;
An Yimmy get mad an rais leetle row,
An Tillie ban lonsum from den untel now.
No oder cum long who vant a nice vife,
So Tillie ban goin alon al her life.
Her ban purty sorry, an vant a nice man;
Her tak him an luv him es much as her can.

Den bakvard, turn bakvard, O Time en yur flite!
Mak me 18 agan, yoost fer tunite.
Gev me der pep vot oder gurls no;
Fine me a man an gev me von sho.
Ogly er purty, leetle er tall,
Tillie vil luv him, sol, body an all.
Gev her von shans agan, gev her von shans;
Fer enything soot her, ef he only vares pants.

—Jerome Williams

"Dusting Off The Old Ones"

OLE OLSON AND MAUD MULLER

(Pioneer files, October, 1919)

Maud Muller, on a summer's day,
 Raked the meadow sweet with hay.
 The sun was hot, and so was Maud
 Whose only wish was, "O, my gawd!
 Why don't some man who wants a wife
 Come buzzing by, take me for life?"
 And as Maud raked, and father mowed,
 A cloud of dust came down the road.
 Ten thousand clattering, tiny feet
 And many a weary, plaintive bleat
 Came drifting down the hill so steep—
 'Twas Ole Olson and his sheep.
 "Hallo, Mees Maud!"—as he crossed the yard—
 "Yu tank yu ban a vorkin hard?"
 "Oh, no," said Maud, "this is play!
 All you do is rake the hay;
 Gather it up in ricks, so wide,
 And cuss a little on the side.
 Bend your back till your corset rips;
 And your backbone aches from neck to hips.
 Why, Ole, dear, you foolish boy,
 This is the only real, true joy."
 "Vel, ay ban tankin," Ole said,
 As he stopped to scratch his big tow head,
 "Dat Ole ban a goin tu tak
 A vooman hu vas used tu rak.
 Her mak him von gude vorkin vife
 An poot som yoy en Ole's life.
 Her soon skal no each leetle treek
 An tend der sheep ven Ole seek.
 An ven he go tu pay hes beels
 Her tak der voolies tu der heels.
 Her cook der grub an vash der clos
 An feed der creeples ven et snos.
 An ven der leetle Oles com
 Beeg Ole no he ban going som.
 An so, Mees Maud, yu drop der rak,
 Fer Ole yu ban goin tu tak."
 But at the thought our Maud rebelled
 And swinging her rake, she fairly yelled:
 "Beat it, you mutt! You sheep camp stew!
 Your sheep smell bad and so do you.
 Hike for that hill up there, you see?
 Before you get your ticks on me."
 Ole looked back as he climbed the hill
 And saw Maud Muller standing still.
 And as he rubbed his throbbing head
 Turned to his sheep and loudly said:
 "Dees ban tru vords ov tung er pen
 Ay bust her dom hed her say et agen!"

—Jerome Williams