

"The Unfortunate Swain" and Related Songs

1. "A New Love Song"

From: Two excellent New songs. I. A new Love Song. II. Newcastle Ale, [1750?] ([Roxburghe Ballads III.421](#), available at the English Broadside Ballad Archive, EBBA; possibly published in Newcastle by John White, ESTC [T52067](#))

Down in yon Meadow fresh and gay,
Picking of Flowers the other day,
Picking of Lillies red and blue:
I little thought what Love could do.

Where Love is planted there it grows,
It buds and blossoms much like a Rose;
And has a sweet and pleasant smell,
No Flower on earth can it excel.

Must I be bound, must she be free,
Must I love one that loves not me;
If I should act such a childish Part
To love a Girl that will break my Heart.

If there are thousands, thousands in a Room,
My true love she carries the brightest Bloom,
Sure she is some chosen one,
I will have her or I'll have none.

I saw a Ship sailing on the Deep,
She sail'd as deep as she could swim;
But not so deep as in Love I am,
I care not whether it sink or swim.

I set my Back against an oak,
I thought it was a trusty tree,
But first it bent and then it broke
So did my false Love to me.

I put my Hand into the Bush,
Thinking the sweetest Rose to find,
I prick'd my Fingers to the Bone,
And left the sweetest Rose behind.

If Roses be such prickly Flowers,
They should be gather'd while they're green,
And he that loves an unkind Lover,
I'm sure he strives against the stream.

When my love is dead and at an end,
I'll think of her whom I love best
I'll wrap her up Linning strong,
And think on her when she's dead and gone.

2. "The Unfortunate Swain"

From: The Merry Songster. Being a collection of songs, Printed and sold in Aldermary Church Yard, Bow Lane, London, [1770?], ESTC [T39283](#), available at ECCO

Down in a Meadow both fair and gay,
Plucking a Flowers the other day,
Plucking a Flower both red and blue,
I little thought what Love could do.

Where Love's planted there it grow,
It buds and blows much like any Rose;
And has so sweet and pleasant smell,
No Flower on Earth can it excell.

Must I be bound and she be free?
Must I love one that loves not me?
Why should I act such a childish Part
To love a Girl that will break my Heart.

There's thousand thousands in room,
My true love carries the highest Bloom,
Sure she is some chosen one,
I will have her, or I'll have none.

I spy'd a Ship sailing on the Deep,
She sail'd as deep as she could swim;
But not so deep as in Love I am,
I care not whether I sink or swim.

I set my Back against an oak,
I thought it had been a Tree;
But first it bent and then it broke,
So did my false Love to me.

I put my Hand into a Bush,
Thinking the sweetest Rose to find,
I prick'd my Finger to the Bone,
And left the sweetest Rose behind.

If Roses are such prickly Flowers,
They should be gather'd while they're green,
And he that loves an unkind Lover,
I'm sure he strives against the stream.

When my love is dead and at her rest,
I'll think of her whom I love best
I'll wrap her up in Linnen strong,
And think on her when she's dead and gon.

3. "The Unfortunate Swain. A new Song"

Broadside, no imprint, [1780?] (ESTC [T010507](#) available at ECCO; same edition with identical woodcut and text: [Harding B22\(312\)](#), undated, in the *allegro Catalogue & Madden Ballads*, Reel 3, Frame 1936; another edition with the same text (in the last verse the lines are printed in the wrong order) but a different woodcut, published [1790?] (ESTC [T050423](#), available at ECCO)

Down in a meadow fair and gay
Plucking a Rose the other day,
Plucking a Rose both red and blue,
I little thought what love could do.

Where love is planted there it grows,
It buds and blossoms like a rose,
And has so sweet and pleasant smell,
No power on earth can it excel.

Must I be bound that can go free?
Must I love one that loves not me?
Why should I act such a childish part
To love a girl that will break my heart.

If there's a thousand in the room,
My true love has the highest bloom,
Sure she is some chosen one,
I will have her or, I'll have none.

I spy'd a ship sailing in the deep
She sailed as deep as she could swim,
But not deep as in love I am,
I care not whether I sink or swim.

I set my foot against an oak
I thought it had been a trusty tree,
But first it bent and then it broke
And so did my true love to me.

I put my band into a bush,
Thinking the sweetest rose to find,
I prick'd my finger to the bone,
I wish I'd left that rose behind.

If roses are such prickly flowers,
They should be gathered while they are green,
And he that loves an unkind maid,
I'm sure he strives against the stream.

When my love is dead and at her rest
I'll think of her whom I love best
To wrap her up in linen strong
I'll think of her when dead and gone.

4. "A new song, intituled Picking Lilies"

From: Four excellent songs intituled, I. Picking Lillies. II. The Sailor's Lamentation. III. Low down in the Broom. IV. Willie is the Lad for me, [Newcastle upon Tyne?, 1780?] (ESTC [T012281](#), available at ECCO)

Down in a Meadow fresh and gay,
Picking lilies all the day,
Picking lillies red and blue:
I little thought what love could do.

Where love is planted there it grows,
It buds and blossoms like any Rose;
It has so sweet and a pleasant smell,
No flowers on earth it can excel.

There's thousands, thousands in a room,
My love she carries the brightest bloom,
Surely she is the chosen one,
I will have her or I will have none.

I saw a ship sailing on the sea,
Loaded as deep as she could be;
But not so deep as in love I am,
I care not whether I sink or swim.

I set my back unto an oak,
Thinking it was some trusty tree,
But first it bow'd and then it brake
And so did my true Love to me.

I put my hand into the bush,
Thinking the sweetest rose to find,
I prick'd my Finger into the Bone,
But left the sweetest Rose behind.

If roses be such a prickly flower,
They ought to be gathered while they're green,
And he that loves an unkind lover,
I am sure he striveth against the stream.

When my love and I is gone to rest,
I'll think of her whom I love best
I'll wrap her in the linen strong,
And I'll think on her when she's dead & gone.

5. "Picking Lilies"

From: The Dandy---o. To which are added, Tippet is the dandy---o. The toper's advice. Picking lilies. The dying swan, Glasgow 1799 (ESTC [T190595](#), available at ECCO). A very similar text with some minor variations was published in W. H. Logan, A Pedlar's Pack of Ballads and Songs, Edinburgh 1869, pp. 336-7 (available at [The Internet Archive](#)). His source was another chapbook: Four excellent new songs, 1. The Captain's Frolic; 2. Picking Lilies; The distressed sailors on the rocks of Scylla; 4. The Generous Gentleman, ca. 1782

Down in yon meadow fresh and gay,
Picking lilies the other day,
Picking lilies red and blue:
I little thought what Love could do.

Where love is planted there it grows,
It buds and blossoms like any rose;
It has such a sweet and pleasant smell,
No flower on earth can it excel.

There are thousands, thousands in a room,
My true love she carries the brightest bloom,
She surely is some chosen one,
I will have her or I will have none.

I saw a Ship sailing on the Sea,
As deeply loaden as she could be,
But not so deep as in love I am,
I care not whether I sink or swim.

Must I be bound shall she go free?
Must I love one that loves not me!
If I should act such a childish part,
As to love one that would break my Heart.

I put my hand into the Bush,
Thinking the sweetest rose to find,
But I prick'd my fingers to the bone,
And left the sweetest rose behind.

If roses be such prickly flowers,
They should be gather'd when they are green,
For he that woos an unkind Lover,
I'm sure he striveth against the stream.

If my love were dead and gone to rest,
I would think on her that I love best,
I'll wrap her up in linen strong,
And think on her when she's dead and gone.

6. "Maid's Complaint"

Text from undated broadsides in the Madden Collection (Madden Ballads, Reel 8, Frame 5377; Reel 9, Frames 5914 & 6132)

Down in a meadow fine and gay,
Plucking the flowers the other day,
Plucking the flowers red and blue:
I little thought what Love could do.

Where Love is plenty there it grows,
It buds and flowers like a Rose;
It is such a sweet and pleasant smell,
No flower on earth can it excel.

I saw a Ship sailing on the main,
As deep as ever it could swim;
But not so deep as is my pain,
I care not whether I sink or swim.

I set my back against an oak,
I took it for a trusty tree,
But first it bent and then it broke
So did my false love to me.

I put my Hand into a bush,
Thinking the sweetest flower to find,
I prick'd my finger to the bone,
And left the sweetest rose behind.

If roses are such prickling Flowers,
They should be gather'd while they are green,
And they that love inconstant lovers,
Are sure to strive against the stream.

Must I be bound and he be free,
Must I love one that loves not me;
If I should act such a foolish part
To love a man that will break my heart.

I'll lay me down and take my rest,
And think on him whom I love best;
I'll lay him up in my memory so strong,
He'll think on me when I'm dead and gone.