

Stanfordian Thoughts
A periodical series of reflections on recorded and unrecorded works by Stanford
by Christopher Howell

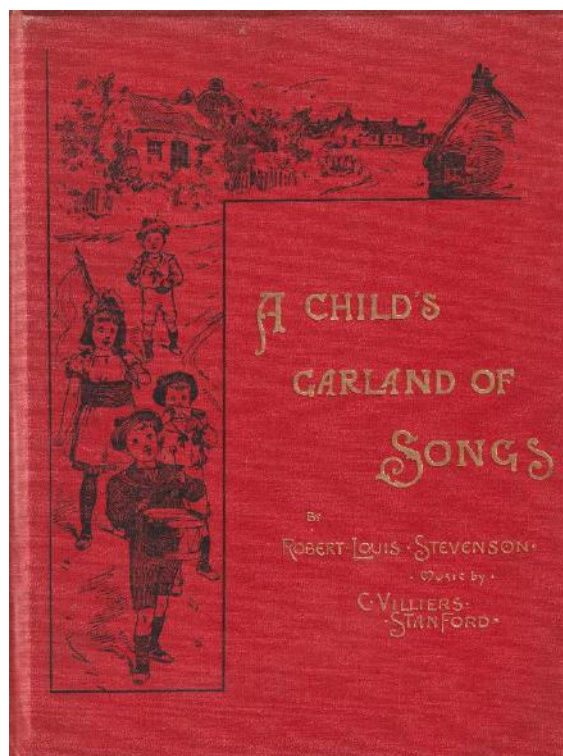
10. A Child's Garland of Songs, op.30

This article is prompted by the forthcoming first complete recording of this cycle, sung by mezzo-soprano Elisabetta Paglia and accompanied by the undersigned.

Few publications can be more charming than the original edition of *A Child's Garland of Songs*¹, handsomely bound in red cloth board with an illustration and the title in engraved gold lettering. Charming, but also a “complete” artwork. The poems, obviously, were Stanford's selection from *A Child's Garden of Verses*² by Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894). Stevenson, however, lent his imprimatur to the enterprise by providing a short prefatory poem:

Come, my little children, here are songs for you,
Some are short, and some are long, and all, all are new.
You must learn to sing them very small and clear,
Very true to time and tune, and pleasing to the ear.

Mark the note that rises, mark the notes that fall,
Mark the time when broken, and the swing of it all.
So when the night is come, and you have gone to bed,
All the songs you love to sing shall echo in your head³.



The artistic trinity of literature, music and figurative art is completed with drawings of considerable quality, one at the head of each song and often – space permitting – another at the foot. Their author is not named and no trace of a signature or initials can be found among them⁴. One dealer has suggested that “Stevenson and his daughter are the main suspects”⁵.

The former claim need not detain us. Richard J. Hill⁶ has shown that Stevenson had very definite opinions about book illustration and was demanding upon his collaborators. Hill makes no suggestion, though, that Stevenson himself made any illustrations except a couple of charts for *Treasure Island* and *The Beach of*

¹ Longmans, Green & Co., 1892

² Longmans, Green & Co., 1885

³ This poem was later included in the posthumous *New Poems and Variant Readings by Robert Louis Stevenson*, Chatto & Windus, 1918, p.87

⁴ The original Longman edition can be found here, though the resolution is rather low: <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00082010/00001/images/16>. Retrieved 27.5.2022. The illustrations in this article are scanned from my own copy.

⁵

https://www.abebooks.com/servlet/SearchResults?bi=0&bx=off&ds=30&kn=A+Child+Longman+s+Stevenson+Robert&sts=t&x=0&y=0&yrh=1892&yr=1892&clickid=TZDz2mVbWxyIUZq0CzSaoUE-UkDxl20xFRCsYM0&cm_mmc=aff-ir-59879-77798&ref=imprad59879&afn_sr=impact, retrieved 27.5.2022.

⁶ Richard J. Hill: *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Pictorial Text. A Case-Study in the Victorian Illustrated Novel*, Routledge, 2016.

Falesá. By 1891/2, moreover, he was so ill he often needed to dictate to an amanuensis, so would presumably have reserved his waning forces for literature.

Stevenson's daughter is easily dismissed since he had none, but assuming the dealer meant Stevenson's stepdaughter, this is a claim worth examining. Isobel ("Belle") Osbourne Strong Field (1858-1953)⁷ was the daughter by a previous marriage of Frances "Fanny" Matilda Van de Grift Osbourne Stevenson (1840-1914)⁸, who became Stevenson's wife, having long been his mistress, in 1880. Fanny and Belle were both born in Indianapolis (USA), but moved to Europe in 1875, first to Antwerp, then to Paris, where they enrolled at the Académie Julian as art students. They then moved to Grez-sur-Loing, where Fanny met Stevenson. Fanny's artistic pretensions were mainly literary. At the time of her meeting with Stevenson, she was supporting herself and her children⁹ as a short story writer. Stevenson's *More New Arabian Nights: The Dynamiter* (1885) contains some of her work, though the jury is still out on just how much¹⁰.

Belle, on the other hand, worked as an artist and illustrator for most of her mature life. In 1891, she joined Stevenson and her mother at Vailima, Samoa. Her principal work in the household was to act as amanuensis for her ailing stepfather, while at the same time preparing to divorce her alcoholic husband Joseph Dwight Strong (1853-1899), also an artist and illustrator. The divorce came through in 1892. She was therefore competent to provide illustrations for *Garland* and on the spot at about the right time to have done so. The examples of her style shown at the Stevenson site¹¹ are too few and too poorly reproduced to allow any conclusions about stylistic consistency with the *Garland* illustrations, but the sketch of "Louis reading to Fanny" (c.1891) does not seem a mile away. The arguments against Belle as author of the illustrations are:

1. Her work as Stevenson's amanuensis and the problems associated with the end of her marriage may not have left her much time for drawing.
2. Authorship by a member of the Stevenson family circle would logically have been acknowledged by the publisher. As a selling-point, though, it would also have had its drawbacks, since Stevenson's long unmarried relationship with Fanny was a black mark against him in the best British society. Moreover, Stevenson's friends resented Fanny on the grounds that she was excessively proprietorial towards him and, in their view, a hindrance to his artistic growth¹².
3. The illustrator of *Garland* shows a strong empathy with the Victorian nursery and the English countryside. It is not clear, from Belle's biography, where she could have obtained such empathy.

The latter point, however subjective, is the clinching one for me. Attractive as it is to hypothesize an involvement in the illustrations by a member of the Stevenson family, it is far more likely that they were done by a Longmans house illustrator whom the publisher felt no more deserving of acknowledgement than the typesetter. An uncommonly gifted house illustrator, though, a worthy colleague of Tenniel, Rackham or E.H. Shephard. These drawings "complete" the volume, making it a wonderful evocation of a lost world of Victorian childhood.

What this entrancing volume does not tell us, though, is whether the songs are for solo voice or unison singing. Nor did their next appearance in print help. This was *The Stevenson Song-Book*. Issued in New York

⁷ Strong and Field were her married names.

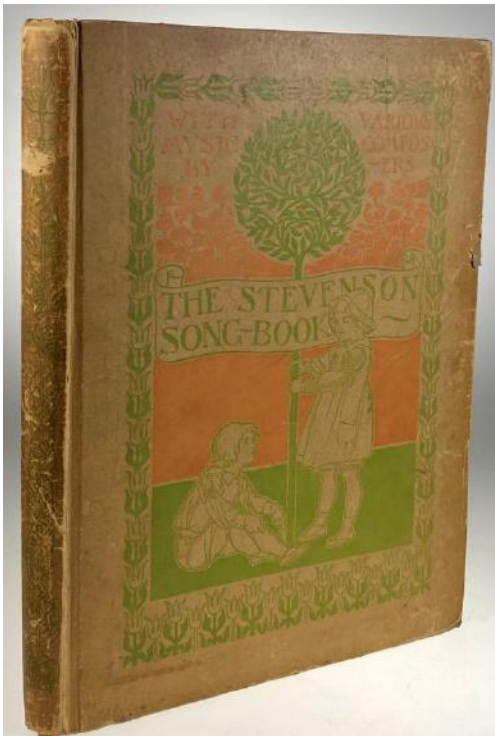
⁸ Osbourne and Stevenson were her married names.

⁹ As well as Belle, there was a son, Hervey Stewart, who died in 1876.

¹⁰ See, for example, <https://thedynamiter.llc.ed.ac.uk/>, retrieved 27.5.2022.

¹¹ <https://stevensonmuseum.org/robert-louis-stevenson/the-life/family/isobel-osbourne/>, retrieved 27.5.2022.

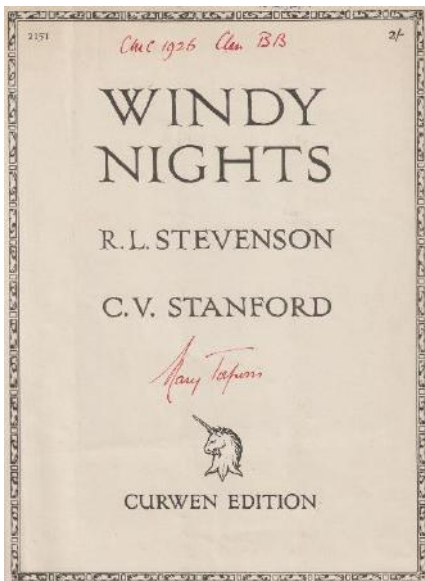
¹² Conversely, it has been argued that, without Fanny, Stevenson would have got precious little done during his last years, which were, instead, remarkably productive considering his state of health. Fanny's role as Stevenson's wife is discussed in Margaret Forster: *Good Wives?*, Chatto & Windus, 2001.



in 1897 by Stevenson's American publisher Charles Scribner's Sons, it contained twenty settings from *A Child's Garden*. As well as Stanford's nine, all present, there were songs by Reginald de Koven (2), W.W. Gilchrist (2), Homer N. Bartlett (2), C.B. Hawley, Arthur Foote (2) and G.W. Chadwick (2). There are no illustrations. Stanford's settings are interspersed among the others, without opus number and in higgledy-piggledy order, but with no textual changes except that *My Ship and Me* has been retitled *My Ship and I*. As with the 1892 edition, nothing indicates whether the songs are for solo or unison singing¹³.

Garland faded from view until 1914, when a revised edition was issued by Curwen. *Pirate Story*, *Marching Song* and *My Ship and Me* were now offered as two-part songs, while the others were clearly labelled as unison songs. Each song

was issued separately – there was no single-volume option – and a Tonic Sol-fa edition was also available. Additionally, *Windy Nights* was issued as a solo song in 1919.



Does the clear designation of the 1914 edition for choral singing allow us to backtrack and state that the 1892 and 1897 editions were likewise intended as unison songs? Some such assumption seems to have been made. Frederick Hudson's catalogue¹⁴ says that the 1892 edition has "each song in its original unison setting" even though, as stated above, the score carries no such indication. Michael Pilkington admits only *Windy Nights* to his list of Stanford solo songs¹⁵. Porte¹⁶ and Rodmell¹⁷ refer only to the Curwen edition, but Dibble¹⁸, in his work list, places *Garland* among "Solo and Duet" rather than "Unison".

The image shows a page of a musical score for the song 'My Shadow'. The title 'My Shadow.' is prominently displayed at the top. Below the title, it says 'UNISON SONG.' and 'C. V. STANFORD Op. 81 No. 4'. The score is written for voice and piano. The voice part is marked 'Allegro scherzando'. The piano part is marked 'Allegro'. The lyrics are: 'I have a lit-tle shad-dow that goes with me and that goes with me, but all the time I see the shad-dow, which is like me, and that is why I like the shad-dow so.' The score is arranged in a two-staff system with a treble clef for the voice and a bass clef for the piano.

¹³ The Stevenson Song-Book can be found here: <https://digital.case.edu/islandora/object/ksl%3Akulsc000434>, retrieved 27.5.2022.

¹⁴ Frederick Hudson: *A New Catalogue of the Works of Charles Villiers Stanford 1852-1924, Compiled from the Original Sources*, typescript 1994. Held in the Stanford Collection of Newcastle University and accessible here: https://www.ncl.ac.uk/webtemplate/libraryassets/external/special-collections-guide/handlists/stanford_charles_villiers_archive.pdf. Retrieved 13.4.2022.

¹⁵ Michael Pilkington: *English Solo Song, guides to the repertoire 5: Parry & Stanford*, Thames Publishing, 1997, p.64. Misleadingly, Pilkington claims that the 1892 edition "consisted of three two-part songs and six unison songs".

¹⁶ John F. Porte: *Sir Charles V. Stanford*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1921, p.36.

¹⁷ Paul Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, Ashgate, 2002, Appendix One.

¹⁸ Jeremy Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford, Man and Musician*, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.483.

The objections to the 1892 *Garland* as unison songs are:

1. Unison songs are normally published singly and in octavo size (pages 10"/25.4cm), making them easy to handle and inexpensive to buy in large quantities. Whereas solo songs were normally published in quarto (pages 12"/30.48cm high), singly or in albums. True to form, the 1914 Curwen edition issued each song separately in its unison or two-part form, with pages 10" high, while the solo version of *Windy Nights* had pages 12" high. The 1892 Longmans edition was bound in cloth boards and with pages an anomalous 11"/27.94cm high. It would have been expensive to kit a large class out with copies and they would have been inconvenient to handle. The 1897 Scribner edition was an even more substantial volume. So far as is known, Longmans issued no offprints of the single songs.
2. Unison and other choral songs were invariably issued in Tonic Sol-fa alternatives. The 1914 edition had this option, the 1892 one did not.
3. The changes made to the music in the 1914 edition are few but, apart from the extended galloping in *Windy Nights*, seem mainly concerned with removing irregularities of phrase likely to trip up inexperienced singers. This seems like a transition from solo songs to unison.

The latter point may be dismissed as subjective. The first two points can be countered by suggesting that the children could have learnt the songs by ear, so only one copy would have been needed, and that Stanford may not have wished to issue a Tonic Sol-fa edition. However, Stanford expressed strong views on these very subjects in a lecture given in 1889, around the time these songs were composed¹⁹. On "singing by ear", Stanford had this to say:

Vast sums of money are being expended in grants for musical education in this country, and the British taxpayer has a right to claim that those grants should be properly applied ... £43,000 a year is spent on the accomplishment known as "singing by ear". ... I am convinced, however, that the time has now come for discontinuing a grant for this purpose ... It is neither more nor less than a premium on bawling. ... I doubt if a proposition to recite a piece of poetry without being able to read it would be thought worthy of a grant ... I ask the same for music. If you teach it, teach it thoroughly by note; and cease to give a premium for a smattering which is useless as well as superficial. No system which teaches a child that a certain sign represents a certain sound, either absolutely or relatively, can in its essence be mischievous. What is mischievous is haphazard training, and of all such haphazard methods "singing by ear" is the most dangerous, unless it is rapidly corrected by the influence of singing by note²⁰.

On Tonic Sol-fa, Stanford continued as follows:

Let me say at once that no one is more convinced than I am of the great value and of the great services rendered by Tonic Sol-fa notation. It has without doubt simplified vocal music in a most marked way ... For school purposes and for vocal music it is simply invaluable²¹.

Stanford does also consider the principal drawback of the Tonic Sol-fa system, namely its unsuitability to more complex forms of music, and declared that it was

¹⁹ Stanford's lecture on Music in Elementary Schools was given on 29 November 1889 at the London Board School and was published in *Elementary Schools: How to Increase their utility, being Six lectures delivered to the Managers of the London Board Schools in 1889 and 1890, with Preface by William Bousfield*, Percival & Co., 1890, pp.27-48. This book may be accessed at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112069014972&view=1up&seq=8&skin=2021>, retrieved 30.5.2022.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

*.. of the highest importance for the cultivation of music in this country that the bridge between the Tonic Sol-fa and the old notation systems should be made as practical and as easy as it is possible to make it ...*²²

Stanford also addressed the question of what should be sung:

*Without doubt, national music, folk-music – the music which from the earliest times has grown up amongst the people. Without the foundations of such music no healthy taste can be fostered in the population. ... in the British Isles you have the greatest and most varied storehouse of national music in existence*²³.

Garland, as issued in 1892, would therefore seem antithetic to all Stanford's most cherished beliefs regarding singing in schools. If the argument is accepted, then, that these were originally solo songs, who was to sing them?

One possible answer is Stanford's wife Jennie, who had some hopes of becoming a singer at the time the couple met. She did not pursue this ambition, but that need not have stopped from singing simple songs at home to her children. Other possible performers were Stanford's children, Guy and Geraldine, to whom the work was dedicated. Neither of them followed a musical career, and precious little is known about them at all. In c.1894, Stanford dedicated his *Ten Dances Old and New for Young Players*, op.58, to Guy and Geraldine, so presumably they were able to play them by then. For what it is worth, two of the songs, *Pirate Story* and *My Ship and Me*, seem to have been conceived for a lower voice. When preparing transpositions for recording by a mezzo-soprano, these two proved to be sufficiently low as written. They are the most evidently masculine of the songs, so perhaps Guy had a lower voice than Geraldine. The most likely market for such an album, therefore, was for domestic use by mothers and aunts, or by budding young musicians in the family.

If the argument that these are solo songs is not accepted, the unison song as a genre, to which some of Britain's finest composers contributed prolifically in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, poses a problem. Music in state schools has not developed as Stanford hoped it might, and many song texts, including some of these by Stevenson, would seem strange indeed to a multi-ethnic classroom of youngsters well versed in computer lore. The only likelihood of our ever hearing any of this music depends on its suitability for solo use. *Garland*, at least, surely passes that test.

If Guy and Geraldine were budding little pianists in 1894, when was *Garland* written? Stanford habitually dated his manuscripts, and his publishers often obliged him by printing the date at the end of the score. Longmans did not do this with *Garland*²⁴ and the manuscript is missing. Rodmell tells us that it was written between June 1887 and July 1888²⁵. The previous opus number, *Oedipus Tyrannus* op.29, is dated August 1887 on the score and the following one, the Fourth Symphony op.31, was completed on 31st July 1888. Stanford generally kept his worklist in good chronological order, so Rodmell presumably made the entirely reasonable assumption that op.30 was written in the space between opp. 29 and 31. Dibble has a different account, however:

In the last week of January 1892 they [the Stanford family] finally left Ireland to spend some time with his wife's sister in St. Leonards on the Sussex coast. ... both Geraldine and Guy contracted influenza

²² Ibid., p.38

²³ Ibid., pp. 40-43.

²⁴ Nor did Scribner or Curwen.

²⁵ Ibid., p.137

*which led them to be quarantined at the top of the house. During the children's recovery, and for their mutual amusement, Stanford composed A Child's Garland of Songs ...*²⁶

This is a highly attractive idea and Dibble could hardly have made it up, though it is a pity he quotes no source for the story. Another story of the Stanford children's quarantine is related by Plunket Greene:

I met Stanford for the first time the following year (1888). We were both at a party at the late Arthur Coleridge's house. I sang at it, and on the strength of what he heard he engaged me for a C.U.M.S. concert the following spring. ...

*It was on this occasion that I met for the first time two people of whom I was to see so much in the days to come – Geraldine Stanford, aged 6, and her brother Guy, aged 4. Alas! I was not allowed to shake them by the hand; they were behind bars. They were just recovering from measles, and the gate at the top of the stairs was their boundary – thither they might go and no farther*²⁷.

Plunket Greene could be hazy over dates. If 1888 is correct, Geraldine and Guy would have been 5 and 3 respectively²⁸. Greene first sang at a Cambridge University Musical Society concert on 14th November 1888, when Stanford accompanied him in songs by Schubert and Brahms²⁹. On 14th March 1889, however, the C.U.M.S. held a gala dinner celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Joachim's first public appearance³⁰. The following evening Joachim was honoured with a concert at which Joachim joined Stanford and Hausmann in Brahms's recent Piano Trio op.101 and Plunket Greene contributed songs by Schubert, Brahms, Joachim himself and Stanford himself³¹. Plunket Greene would appear to have recalled this much more important occasion as his actual first appearance there.

Poor Geraldine and Guy, then, were confined at least twice over – in 1888 with measles and in 1892 with influenza. It looks more likely, therefore, that *Garland* was occasioned by the 1888 quarantine.

I have been out of the UK for too long to offer any observations over the current standing of *A Child's Garden of Verse* as a text for elementary schools or for home use. I recall how I thrilled to *Windy Nights* when I was seven or eight, not least because our teacher, one Mr. West, read it so dramatically – he almost rose from his chair at "A man goes riding by". Other poems in the book, particularly *The friendly cow all red and white*, seemed to me rather silly even at that age. *Windy Nights* must surely retain its appeal, but *Foreign Children* risks being a red rag to a bull in a classroom with a high multi-ethnic content. I doubt if today's children, who see foreign lands regularly on TV or on their mobiles, could see the point of sitting in a basket on the meadow and imagining themselves on a pirate ship sailing to far-off countries. Their imaginations may be all the poorer for this inability, but may possibly have been enriched in other ways by their computer games. *Garland*, I would suggest, is best appreciated today as a set of songs about Victorian childhood, an evocation of a world where everything was large and strange and wonderful, that lives on in an idealized form through such works as Stanford's *Garland*.

A sensitive child may have been intrigued, though, and a sensitive adult will surely be so, by the simplicity yet aptness of some of Stanford's pictorial and humoristic touches. I will try to illustrate these in the notes below.

²⁶ Ibid., p.235

²⁷ Harry Plunket Greene: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, Edward Arnold & Co., 1935, pp.84-86.

²⁸ Geraldine was born on 19th February 1883, Guy on 3rd March 1885.

²⁹ Dibble, *ibid.*, p.200.

³⁰ The menu for this event can be seen in Gerald Norris: *Stanford, the Cambridge Jubilee and Tchaikovsky*, David & Charles, 1980, p.57.

³¹ Dibble, *ibid.*, p.207.

1. Bed in Summer

The musical phrase to which “In summer, quite the other way, I have to go to bed by day” is set, is a virtual inversion of the preceding phrase “In winter I get up at night And dress by yellow candle-light”. The piano’s gentle staccatos for “the birds still hopping on the tree” are transformed into a heavy tramp for “the grown-up people’s feet Still going past me in the street”. The final plaintive question is perfectly rendered by finishing off-key. Inexplicably, in the 1914 version, this was modified to a relatively banal perfect cadence.



*In winter I get up at night
And dress by yellow candle-light.
In summer, quite the other way,
I have to go to bed by day.*

*I have to go to bed and see
The birds still hopping on the tree,
Or hear the grown-up people's feet
Still going past me in the street.*

*And does it not seem hard to you,
When all the sky is clear and blue,
And I should like so much to play,
To have to go to bed by day?*

2. Pirate Story

A nicely lilting accompaniment with the stampeding cattle at the end as the only illustrative touch. The piano's final diminuendo shows the passing of danger as the children safely reach the garden.



*Three of us afloat in the meadow by the swing,
 Three of us aboard in the basket on the lea.
 Winds are in the air, they are blowing in the spring,
 And waves are on the meadow like the waves there are at sea.*

*Where shall we adventure, today that we're afloat,
 Wary of the weather and steering by a star?
 Shall it be to Africa, a-steering of the boat,
 To Providence, or Babylon, or off to Malabar?*

*Hi! But here's a squadron a-rowing on the sea,
 Cattle on the meadow a-charging with a roar!
 Quick, and we'll escape them, they're as mad as they can be,
 The wicket is the harbour and the garden is the shore.*

3. Foreign Lands

Another pleasantly lilting accompaniment which reserves its illustrative touch for the end, where a Schumannesque piano postlude describes the playthings coming alive. The phrase first heard at "I saw the next door garden lie", which curls round from a gentle F major to a plaintive G minor, is very typically Stanfordian.



*Up into the cherry tree
Who should climb but little me?
I held the trunk with both my hands
And look'd abroad on foreign lands.*

*I saw the next door garden lie,
Adorn'd with flow'rs, before my eye,
And many pleasant places more
That I had never seen before.*

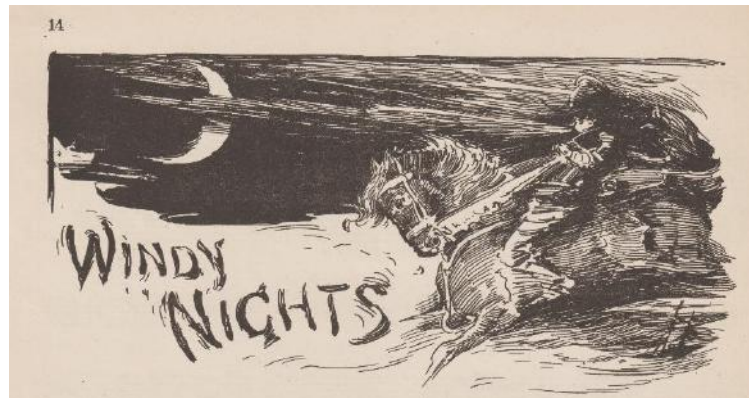
*I saw the dimpling river pass
And be the sky's blue looking glass;
The dainty roads go up and down
With people tramping into town.*

*If I could find a higher tree,
Farther and farther I should see,
To where the grown-up river slips
Into the sea among the ships,*

*To where the roads on either hand
Lead onward into fairyland,
Where all the children dine at five,
And all the playthings come alive.*

4. Windy Nights

The dactylic galloping rhythm in the piano accompaniment may seem the “obvious” solution, but Stanford’s use of it is subtly effective in the way the harmony sometimes sits on the same chord for several bars and then dramatically moves to a new harmony. The galloping in the voice part was extended in the 1914 edition. This was the one obvious improvement, but for this recording it was decided to be purist and remain with the 1892 version throughout. The 1914 edition can be heard in the recording by Stephen Varcoe.



*Whenever the moon and the stars are set,
Whenever the wind is high,
All night long in the dark and wet,
A man goes riding by.
Late in the night when the fires are out,
Why does he gallop and gallop about?*

*Whenever the trees are crying aloud,
And ships are toss'd at sea,
By, on the highway, low and loud,
By at the gallop goes he.
By at the gallop he goes, and then
By he comes back at the gallop again.*

5. Where go the boats

The flow of the river is represented by a gentle stream of quavers in the pianist's right hand. The left hand chords need careful handling if they are not to become grumpy as they descend to the lower range of the keyboard.



*Dark brown is the river,
Golden is the sand.
It flows along for ever
With trees on either hand.*

*Green leaves a-floating,
Castles of the foam,
Boats of mine a-boating –
Where will all come home?*

*On goes the river
And out past the mill,
Away down the valley,
Away down the hill.*

*Away down the river,
A hundred miles or more,
Other little children
Shall bring my boats ashore.*

6. My Shadow

The shadow is expressed with a canon, but the cleverness is not overdone. The first three verses are what, in Gilbert and Sullivan, would be called a patter song. Yet the pretty little melody contains another of Stanford's curling twists from F major to G minor, a touch that is exploited with great poetry in the last verse, when the shadow disappears.



*I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.
He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;
And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my bed.*

*The funniest thing about him is the way he likes to grow –
Not at all like proper children, which is always very slow;
For he sometimes shoots up taller like an India-rubber ball,
And he sometimes gets so little that there's none of him at all.*

*He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play,
And can only make a fool of me in ev'ry sort of way.
He stays so close beside me, he's a coward you can see;
I'd think shame to stick to nursie as that shadow sticks to me!*

*One morning, very early, before the sun was up,
I rose and found the shining dew on ev'ry buttercup;
But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepy-head,
Had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep in bed.*

7. Marching Song

There are several pictorial touches here. Johnnie can be heard beating his drum in the piano left hand, while at “Each a grenadier!” a snatch of *The British Grenadiers*³² is played. Just in case we missed it, beneath the vocal line, Stanford repeats it in the following interlude. Then, at “Marching double-quick”, the steady quaver movement of the piano breaks into a burst of semiquavers. Some educationalists today might object to Stevenson’s evident condoning of “pillage”.

*Bring the comb and play upon it!
 Marching, here we come!
 Willie cocks his highland bonnet,
 Johnnie beats the drum.
 Mary Jane commands the party,
 Peter leads the rear;
 Feet in time, alert and hearty,
 Each a grenadier!*

*All in the most martial manner
 Marching double-quick;
 While the napkin like a banner
 Waves upon the stick!
 Here’s enough of fame and pillage,
 Great commander Jane!
 Now that we’ve been round the village,
 Let’s go back again.*



8. Foreign Children

Whatever the problems posed by the text, the outer sections of this song find Stanford at his most deeply poetic. With a very few notes, a combination of modality and Purcellian false relations, he conjures up an atmosphere of rapt meditation that looks ahead to Vaughan Williams. When the first verse is repeated as a coda, the atmosphere is heightened with melismatic interludes for the piano.

This was not an isolated case, for *The Voyage of Maeldune*, op. 34, completed in May 1889, contains a similar passage³³. The augmented chords at “the lions over seas” pass almost unnoticed today. Back in 1888, they may still have been enough to suggest the lion’s growl.

³² A traditional marching song used by British, Australian and Canadian artillery units since 1762/3. The author is unknown.

³³ See p. 10 of the vocal score.



*Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,
Little frosty Eskimo,
Little Turk or Japanee,
O! don't you wish that you were me?*

*You have seen the scarlet trees,
And the lions overseas;
You have eaten ostrich eggs,
And turn'd the turtles off their legs.*

*Such a life is very fine,
But it's not so nice as mine:
You must often, as you trod,
Have wearied not to be abroad.*

*You have curious things to eat,
I am fed on proper meat;
You must dwell beyond the foam,
But I am safe and live at home.*

9. My ship and me

This song seems the prototype for the Stanfordian song-type made famous in *Songs of the Sea*, op. 91 (1904) and *Songs of the Fleet*, op. 117 (1910). It must be the first of its type – the earlier *A Hymn in Praise of Neptune*, op. 19 no. 1, though bluffly nautical, does not quite convince as belonging to the genre – while the first fully Stanfordian sea song for baritone is *The Old Navy*, published in 1892³⁴. This side of Stanford may seem quintessentially English, but a glance at his setting of *Johnny Cox*, an Irish folksong³⁵, suggests that even here, he is more Irish than we suppose. Returning to *My Ship and Me*, the harmonies expand boldly in the third verse and the cycle ends with one last pictorial touch – the firing of “the penny cannon in the bow”.

*O it's I that am the captain of a tidy little ship,
Of a ship that goes a-sailing in the pond;
And my ship it keeps a-turning all around and all about;
But when I'm a little older, I shall find the secret out
How to send my vessel sailing on beyond.*

*For I mean to grow as little as the dolly at the helm,
And the dolly I intend to come alive;
And with him beside to help me, it's a-sailing I shall go,
It's a-sailing on the water, when the jolly breezes blow
And the vessel goes a-divie-divie-dive.*

³⁴ To a text by Captain Marryat.

³⁵ No. 24 of *Irish Songs and Ballads*, Novello, 1893.

*O it's then you'll see me sailing thro' the rushes and the reeds,
And you'll hear the water singing at the prow;
For beside the dolly sailor, I'm to voyage and explore,
To land upon the island where no dolly was before,
And to fire the penny cannon in the bow.*



Songs for or about children are a thread that runs through Stanford's work, beginning with *Garland* and culminating with *Songs from an Elfin Pedlar*, one of his last works (1923)³⁶. I hope to return to these in a future article in this series.

Christopher Howell © 2022

Previous articles

1. [Phaudrig Crohoore: An Irish Ballad for chorus and orchestra, op.62](#)
2. [Chamber Music with Strings](#)
3. [The Second Violin Concerto: Did the full score ever exist?](#)
4. [Irish Rhapsody no. 5](#)
5. [Smaller Orchestra Works](#)
6. [Fairy Day](#)
7. [Not-quite-concertos](#)
8. [Partsongs](#)
9. [Stanford's most-played work](#)

³⁶ Pub. 1925, Stainer & Bell. Plunket Greene, *ibid.*, p.273, says they were written in 1923. The score is undated and the MS is missing (see also Hudson, *ibid.*, Section L).