

The Song of Freedom

Lyrics: Rev Hugh Hutton, 1832
Melody: *Bonnie Dundee*

God is our guide from field — from wave, From plough — from an - vil and from loom We

9 come to our count - ry's rights — to save And speak — a ty - rant's fact - ions doom. We

17 raise the watch - word lib - er - ty. We will we will — we will — be free. We

25 raise — the watch - word lib - er - ty. We will — we will — we will — be free.

33 God is our guide. No swords — we draw. We kind - le not — war's bat - tle fires. By

41 reas - on un - ion just - ice law, We claim — the birth - right of — our sires. We

49 raise the watch - word lib - er - ty. We will we will — we will — be free. We

57 raise — the watch - word lib - er - ty. We will — we will — we will — be free.

The Song of Freedom

1. God is our guide from field, from wave,
From plough, from anvil, and from loom;
We come, our country's rights to save,
And speak a tyrant's faction's doom:
We raise the watchword liberty;
We will, we will, we will be free!
We raise the watchword liberty;
We will, we will, we will be free!

2. God is our guide no swords we draw,
We kindle not war's battle fires;
By reason, union, justice, law,
We claim the birthright of our sires:
We raise the watchword liberty;
We will, we will, we will be free!!!
We raise the watchword liberty;
We will, we will, we will be free!

Source:

Joyce Marlow, *The Tolpuddle Martyrs*¹. E Edwards. Personal Recollections of Birmingham and Birmingham Men². Although often attributed to George Lovelace, the leader of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, this song is actually two verses of a hymn composed by the Rev. Hugh Hutton, first sung at a meeting of 200,000 people gathered to petition the House of Lords for workers rights, at Newhall Hill, Birmingham, on May 14th 1832. George Lovelace, wrote out these verses while on trial, with five others, for forming an agricultural labourers union, in Dorchester in 1834. The six, who eventually became known as the *Tolpuddle Martyrs*, were found guilty of a trumped-up offence and were sentenced to seven years transportation and shipped as convicts to New South Wales and Van Dieman's Land. Public disquiet eventually resulted in their full pardon and release. The fight to secure that outcome established unions as institutions for the protection of workers rights. Joyce Marlow ably details the circumstances surrounding their trial, their experiences in Australia, their eventual resolution.

Change in 19th century England was tumultuous: the industrial revolution, rapid growth of towns and cities, the enclosure acts, the dismantling of the remains of a feudal system that formerly protected rural workers and their dependents and the rise of movements to protect workers rights and establish democracy. In the 1800s, rural English workers were amongst the poorest and most repressed in the world. Those who agitated for improvement were vilified, dismissed, evicted, jailed and transported. By every means available: parliament, law, pulpit, newspaper and direct pleas, commands and threats from masters, the upper classes sought to persuade the working class that their calls for fairness and justice were foolish and evil. This song was sung to give workers the courage to stand together and insist upon their rights.

An Internet search for this song's tune proved fruitless. (But it did turn up other songs in this book: *The Coal Owner and the Pitman's Wife* and *My Master and I*.) I believe this setting of *Bonnie Dundee* fits the sentiments of the song.

1. Joyce Marlow, *The Tolpuddle Martyrs*, History Book Club Edition by arrangement with Andrew Deutch, London, 1971.
2. E. Edwards, *Personal Recollections of Birmingham and Birmingham Men*, Reprinted from the "Birmingham Daily Mail," with Revisions, Corrections, and Additions, Birmingham, Midland Educational Trading Company Limited, 1877.
(Project Gutenberg EBook, Produced by the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>)
3. Stand Up Ye Men of Labour, Songs of Walter Pardon, <http://www.mustrand.org.uk/articles/pardon.htm>