



Dame Durden
A Folk Song
Sung by
Thomas Dunn of
Stratton St. Margaret

Dame Durden kept five servant maids

To carry the milking pail,

She also kept five labouring men

To use the spade and flail;

'Twas Moll and Bet, Doll and Kit,

And Dorothy Draggletail,

John and Dick, Joe and Jack

And Humphrey with his flail.

Chorus

(John kissed Molly,

Dick kissed Betty,

Joe kissed Dolly,

Jack kissed Kitty

And Humphrey with his flail

Kissed Dorothy Draggletail,

And Kitty she was a charming maid

To carry the milking pail.)

Dame Durden in the morn so soon
She did begin to call;
To rouse her servant maid s and men
She then began to bawl:
'Twas Moll and Bet, Doll and Kit,
And Dorothy Draggletail,
John and Dick, Joe and Jack,
And Humphrey with his flail.

Chorus Repeat

'Twas on the morn of Valentine,
The birds began to prate,
Dame Durden's servant maids and men
They all began to mate:
'Twas Moll and Bet, Doll and Kit,
And Dorothy Draggletail,
John and Dick, Joe and Jack,
And Humphrey with his flail.

Chorus Repeat

Reported in the Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard, 20th November 1915

The music for this song is produced below .



Dam Dur- den kept five ser- vant maids to car- ry the mil- king pail. She

al- so kept five la- bou- ring men to use the spade and flail. 'Twas Moll and Bet and

Doll and Kit and Dol- ly to drag her tail, It was Tom and Dick and

Joe and Jack and Humph- rey with his flail. Then Tom kissed Mol- ly and

Dick kissed Bet- ty and Joe kissed Dol- ly and Jack kissed Kit- ty and Humph- rey with his

flail, And Kit- ty she was a char- ming girl to car- ry the mil- king pail.

Who was Dame Durden?

Dame Durden from a traditional song, is a name for a housewife; in Dickens's *Bleak House* written in 1853, when Esther Summerson takes over the household keys, she is nicknamed Dame Durden.

Another literary version of the song is found in Thomas Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd* when Gabriel Oake plays it. The song was sung on Valentine's day to celebrate the coming of spring with all its possibilities for courtship.

Many of the dames featured in pantomime today are based on this character, especially that of the widow Twanky in *Aladdin* and the step mother in *Cinderella*.

The song seems to be a traditional song performed all over the south of the country most popular during Victorian and Edwardian times.