

The Pioneer Dulcimer

Sally T. Taylor

She brought the dulcimer
Wrapped softly, though their skin
Was roughened with crude wool
And homespun, leather boots
Shredded and worn to holes;
Their raw, chapped hands and legs
Were wrapped in flapping rags,
And blankets were their coats.

She brought the dulcimer
Packed carefully when the trunks
From emptied rooms across
The seas were left behind—
No room—and dishes, pots
And treasured chairs sat lonely
By dead camps as wagons
Staggered west along
A powdery, gravestrewn trail.

She brought the dulcimer
Played gently after dusk
When tears of blinding loss,
Dissolving hope, and sharp
Regret turned faces East.
But all these sifting pains
Were changed to restful peace,
And all who heard knew why
She brought the dulcimer.

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