

Verses for Children eBook

Verses for Children by Juliana Horatia Ewing

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Contents

Verses for Children eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	5
Page 1.....	6
Page 2.....	8
Page 3.....	10
Page 4.....	12
Page 5.....	14
Page 6.....	16
Page 7.....	18
Page 8.....	20
Page 9.....	22
Page 10.....	24
Page 11.....	26
Page 12.....	29
Page 13.....	31
Page 14.....	33
Page 15.....	35
Page 16.....	37
Page 17.....	39
Page 18.....	41



[Page 19.....43](#)

[Page 20.....45](#)

[Page 21.....47](#)

[Page 22.....49](#)

[Page 23.....51](#)

[Page 24.....53](#)

[Page 25.....55](#)

[Page 26.....57](#)

[Page 27.....59](#)

[Page 28.....61](#)

[Page 29.....63](#)

[Page 30.....65](#)

[Page 31.....67](#)

[Page 32.....69](#)

[Page 33.....71](#)

[Page 34.....73](#)

[Page 35.....75](#)

[Page 36.....77](#)

[Page 37.....79](#)

[Page 38.....81](#)

[Page 39.....83](#)

[Page 40.....85](#)



Page 41.....87

Page 42.....89

Page 43.....91

Page 44.....93

Page 45.....95

Page 46.....97

Page 47.....99

Page 48.....101

Page 49.....103

Page 50.....105



Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
VERSES FOR CHILDREN.		1
THE WILLOW-MAN.		3
A FRIEND IN THE GARDEN.		5
THE DOLLS' WASH.		7
THE BLUE-BELLS ON THE LEA.		10
GRANDMOTHER'S SPRING.		14
KIT'S CRADLE.		17
LITTLE MASTER TO HIS BIG DOG.		20
MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY REVIEW.		34
CONVALESCENCE.		39
SERENADE.		42
AH! WOULD I COULD FORGET.		43
OTHER STARS.		44
SPEED WELL.		45
THE LILY OF THE LAKE.		46
MY LOVE'S GIFT.		47
AUTUMN LEAVES.		48
WHITSUNTIDE.		49
S.P.C.K., NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE, LONDON, W.C.		50



Page 1

VERSES FOR CHILDREN.

THE BURIAL OF THE LINNET.

Found in the garden—dead in his beauty.
Ah! that a linnet should die in the spring!
Bury him, comrades, in pitiful duty,
Muffle the dinner-bell, solemnly ring.

Bury him kindly—up in the corner;
Bird, beast, and gold-fish are sepulchred there;
Bid the black kitten march as chief mourner,
Waving her tail like a plume in the air.

Bury him nobly—next to the donkey;
Fetch the old banner, and wave it about:
Bury him deeply—think of the monkey,
Shallow his grave, and the dogs got him out.

Bury him softly—white wool around him,
Kiss his poor feathers,—the first kiss and last;
Tell his poor widow kind friends have found him:
Plant his poor grave with whatever grows fast.

Farewell, sweet singer! dead in thy beauty,
Silent through summer, though other birds sing;
Bury him, comrades, in pitiful duty,
Muffle the dinner-bell, mournfully ring.

[Illustration: *Master Fritz.*]

Fritz and I are not brother and sister, but we're next-door neighbours; for we both live next door.

I mean we both live next door to each other; for I live at number three, and Fritz and Nickel the dog live at number four.

In summer we climb through the garret windows and sit together on the leads,

And if the sun is too hot Mother lends us one big kerchief to put over both our heads.

Sometimes she gives us tea under the myrtle tree in the big pot that stands in the gutter.

(One slice each, and I always give Fritz the one that has the most butter.)



In winter we sit on the little stool by the stove at number four;
For when it's cold Fritz doesn't like to go out to come in next door.
It was one day in spring that he said, "I should like to
have a house to myself with you Grethel, and Nickel." And I
said, "Thank you, Fritz."
And he said, "If you'll come in at tea-time and sit by the stove, I'll
tell you tales that'll frighten you into fits.
About boys who ran away from their homes, and were taken by robbers,
and run after by wolves, and altogether in a dreadful state.
I saw the pictures of it in a book I was looking in, to see where
perhaps I should like to emigrate.
I've not quite settled whether I shall, or be cast away on a desert
island, or settle down nearer home;
But you'd better come in and hear about it, and then, wherever it is,
you'll be sure to be ready to come."
So I took my darling Katerina in my arms, and we went in to tea.
I love Katerina, though she lost her head long ago, poor thing; but
Fritz made me put her off my knee,
For he said, "When you're hushabying that silly old doll I know you're



Page 2

not attending to me.

Now look here, Grethel, I think I have made up my mind that we won't go far;

For we can have a house, and I can be master of it just as well where we are.

Under the stairs would be a good place for a house for us if there's room.

It's very dirty, but you're the housewife now, and you must sweep it out well with the broom.

I shall expect you to keep my house very comfortable, and have my meals ready when there's anything to eat;

And when Nickel and I come back from playing outside, you may peep out and pretend you're watching for us coming up the street.

You've kept your apple, I see—I've eaten mine—well, it will be something to make a start,

And I'll put by some of my cake, if you'll keep some of yours, and remember Nickel must have part.

I call it your cake and your apple, but of course now you're my housewife everything belongs to me;

But I shall give you the management of it, and you must make it go as far as you can amongst three.

And if you make nice feasts every day for me and Nickel, and never keep us waiting for our food,

And always do everything I want, and attend to everything I say, I'm sure I shall almost always be good.

And if I am naughty now and then, it'll most likely be your fault; and, if it isn't, you mustn't mind;

For even if I seem to be cross, you ought to know that I mean to be kind.

And I'm sure you'll like combing Nickel's hair for my sake; it'll be something for you to do, and it bothers me so!

But it must be done regularly, for if it's not, his curls tangle into lugs as they grow.

I think that's all, dear Grethel, for I love you so much that I'm sure to be easy to please.

Only remember—it's a trifle—but when I want you, never keep that headless doll on your knees.

I'd much rather not have her in my house—there, don't cry! if you will have her, I suppose it must be;

Though I can't think what you want with Katerina when you've got



Nickel and me.”

So I said, “Thank you, dear Fritz, for letting me bring her, for I’ve had her so long I shouldn’t like to part with her now;

And I’ll try and do everything you want as well as I can, now you’ve told me how.”

But next morning I heard Fritz’s garret-window open, and he put out his head,

And shouted, “Grethel! Grethel! I want you. Be quick! Haven’t you got out of bed?”

I ran to the window and said, “What is it, dear Fritz?” and he said, “I want to tell you that I’ve changed my mind.

Hans-Wandermann is here, and he says there are real sapphires on the beach; so I’m off to see what I can find.”

“Oh, Fritz!” I said, “can’t I come too?” but he said, “You’d better not, you’ll only be in the way.

You can stop quietly at home with Katerina, and you may have Nickel too, if he’ll stay.”

But Nickel wouldn’t. I give him far more of my cake than Fritz does, but he likes Fritz better than me.

So dear Katerina and I had breakfast together on the leads under the old myrtle tree.



Page 3

THE WILLOW-MAN.

There once was a Willow, and he was very old,
And all his leaves fell off from him, and left him in the cold;
But ere the rude winter could buffet him with snow,
There grew upon his hoary head a crop of Mistletoe.

All wrinkled and furrowed was this old Willow's skin,
His taper fingers trembled, and his arms were very thin;
Two round eyes and hollow, that stared but did not see,
And sprawling feet that never walked, had this most ancient tree.

A Dame who dwelt near was the only one who knew
That every year upon his head the Christmas berries grew;
And when the Dame cut them, she said—it was her whim—
“A merry Christmas to you, Sir!” *and left a bit for him.*

“Oh, Granny dear, tell us,” the children cried, “where we
May find the shining Mistletoe that grows upon the tree?”
At length the Dame told them, but cautioned them to mind
To greet the Willow civilly, *and leave a bit behind.*

“Who cares,” said the children, “for this old Willow-man?
We’ll take the Mistletoe, and he may catch us if he can.”
With rage the ancient Willow shakes in every limb,
For they have taken all, and *have not left a bit for him!*

Then bright gleamed the holly, the Christmas berries shone,
But in the wintry wind without the Willow-man did moan:
“Ungrateful, and wasteful! the mystic Mistletoe
A hundred years hath grown on me, but never more shall grow.”

A year soon passed by, and the children came once more,
But not a sprig of Mistletoe the aged Willow bore.
Each slender spray pointed; he mocked them in his glee,
And chuckled in his wooden heart, that ancient Willow-tree.

MORAL.

Oh, children, who gather the spoils of wood and wold,
From selfish greed and wilful waste your little hands withhold.
Though fair things be common, this moral bear in mind,
“Pick thankfully and modestly, and leave a bit behind.”



[Illustration]

OUR GARDEN.

The winter is gone; and at first Jack and I were sad,
Because of the snow-man's melting, but now we are glad;
For the spring has come, and it's warm, and we're allowed to garden
in the afternoon;
And summer is coming, and oh, how lovely our flowers will be in June!
We are so fond of flowers, it makes us quite happy to think
Of our beds—all colours—blue, white, yellow, purple, and pink,
Scarlet, lilac, and crimson! And we're fond of sweet scents as well,
And mean to have pinks, roses, sweet peas, mignonette, clove
carnations, musk, and everything good to smell;
Lavender, rosemary, and we should like a lemon-scented verbena, and
a big myrtle tree!



Page 4

And then if we could get an old “preserved-ginger” pot, and some bay-salt, we could make *pot-pourri*.
Jack and I have a garden, though it’s not so large as the big one, you know;
But whatever can be got to grow in a garden we mean to grow.
We’ve got Bachelor’s Buttons, and London Pride, and Old Man, and everything that’s nice:
And last year Jack sowed green peas for our dolls’ dinners, but they were eaten up by the mice.
And he would plant potatoes in furrows, which made the garden in a mess,
So this year we mean to have no kitchen-garden but mustard and cress.
One of us plants, and the other waters, but Jack likes the watering-pot;
And then when my turn comes to water he says it’s too hot!
We sometimes quarrel about the garden, and once Jack hit me with the spade;
So we settled to divide it in two by a path up the middle, and that’s made.
We want some yellow sand now to make the walk pretty, but there’s none about here,
So we mean to get some in the old carpet-bag, if we go to the seaside this year.
On Monday we went to the wood and got primrose plants and a sucker of a dog-rose;
It looks like a green stick in the middle of the bed at present; but wait till it blows!
The primroses were in full flower, and the rose ought to flower soon;
You’ve no idea how lovely they are in that wood in June!
The primroses look quite withered now, I am sorry to say,
But that is not our fault but Nurse’s, and it shows how hard it is to garden when you can’t have your own way.
We planted them carefully, and were just going to water them all in a lump,
When Nurse fetched us both indoors, and put us to bed for wetting our pinafores at the pump.
It’s very hard, and I’m sure the gardener’s plants wouldn’t grow any better than ours,
If Nurse fetched him in and sent him to bed just when he was going to water his flowers.



We've got Blue Nemophila and Mignonette, and Venus's Looking-glass,
and many other seeds;
The Nemophila comes up spotted, which is how we know it from the weeds.
At least it's sure to come up if the hens haven't scratched it up
first.
But when it is up the cats roll on it, and that is the worst!
I sowed a ring of sweet peas, and the last time I looked they were
coming nicely on,
Just sprouting white, and I put them safely back; but when Jack looked
he found they were gone.
Jack made a great many cuttings, but he has had rather bad luck,
I've looked at them every day myself, and not one of them has struck.
The gardener gave me a fine moss-rose, but Jack took it to his side,
I kept moving it back, but he took it again, and at last it died.
But now we've settled to dig up the path, and have the bed as it was
before,
So everything will belong to us both, and we shan't ever quarrel
any more.
It is such a long time, too, to wait for the sand,



Page 5

and perhaps
sea-sand does best on the shore.
We're going to take everything up, for it can't hurt the plants to
stand on the grass for a minute,
And you really can't possibly rake a bed smooth with so many
things in it.
We shall dig it all over, and get leaf-mould from the wood, and hoe
up the weeds,
And when it's tidy we shall plant, and put labels, and strike cuttings,
and sow seeds.
We are so fond of flowers, Jack and I often dream at night
Of getting up and finding our garden ablaze with all colours, blue,
red, yellow, and white.
And Midsummer's coming, and big brother Tom will sit under the tree
With his book, and Mary will beg sweet nosegays of Jack and me.
The worst is, we often start for the seaside about Midsummer Day,
And no one takes care of our gardens whilst we are away.
But if we sow lots of seeds, and take plenty of cuttings before we
leave home,
When we come back, our flowers will be all in full bloom,
Bright, bright sunshine above, and sweet, sweet flowers below.
Come, oh Midsummer, quickly come! and go quickly, Midsummer, go!

P.S. It is so tiresome! Jack wants to build a green-house now,
He has found some bits of broken glass, and an old window-frame, and
he says he knows how.
I tell him there's not glass enough, but he says there's lots,
And he's taken all the plants that belong to the bed and put
them in pots.

A FRIEND IN THE GARDEN.

He is not John the gardener,
And yet the whole day long
Employs himself most usefully,
The flower-beds among.

He is not Tom the pussy-cat,
And yet the other day,
With stealthy stride and glistening eye,
He crept upon his prey.



He is not Dash the dear old dog,
And yet, perhaps, if you
Took pains with him and petted him,
You'd come to love him too.

He's not a Blackbird, though he chirps,
And though he once was black;
And now he wears a loose grey coat,
All wrinkled on the back.

He's got a very dirty face,
And very shining eyes!
He sometimes comes and sits indoors;
He looks—and p'r'aps is—wise.

But in a sunny flower-bed
He has his fixed abode;
He eats the things that eat my plants—
He is a friendly TOAD.

[Illustration]

THREE LITTLE NEST BIRDS.

We meant to be very kind,
But if ever we find
Another soft, grey-green, moss-coated, feather-lined nest in a hedge,
We have taken a pledge—
Susan, Jemmy, and I—with remorseful tears, at this very minute,
That if there are eggs or little birds in it—
Robin or wren, thrush, chaffinch or linnet—
We'll leave them there
To their mother's care.
There were three of us—Kate, and Susan,



Page 6

and Jem—
And three of them—
I don't know *their* names, for they couldn't speak,
Except with a little imperative squeak,
Exactly like Poll,
Susan's squeaking doll;
But squeaking dolls will lie on the shelves
For years and never squeak of themselves:
The reason we like little birds so much better than toys
Is because they are *really* alive, and know how to make a noise.

There were three of us, and three of them;
Kate,—that is I,—and Susan, and Jem.
Our mother was busy making a pie,
And theirs, we think, was up in the sky;
But for all Susan, Jemmy, or I can tell,
She may have been getting their dinner as well.
They were left to themselves (and so were we)
In a nest in the hedge by the willow tree;
And when we caught sight of three red little fluff-tufted, hazel-eyed,
open-mouthed, pink-throated heads, we all shouted for glee.

The way we really did wrong was this:
We took them for Mother to kiss,
And she told us to put them back;
Whilst out on the weeping-willow *their* mother was crying "Alack!"
We really heard
Both what Mother told us to do, and the voice of the mother-bird.
But we three—that is Susan and I and Jem—
Thought we knew better than either of them:
And in spite of our mother's command and the poor bird's cry,
We determined to bring up her three little nestlings ourselves
on the sly.

We each took one,
It did seem such excellent fun!
Susan fed hers on milk and bread,
Jem got wriggling worms for his instead.
I gave mine meat,
For, you know, I thought, "Poor darling pet! why shouldn't it have
roast beef to eat?"
But, oh dear! oh dear! oh dear! how we cried



When in spite of milk and bread and worms and roast beef, the
little birds died!
It's a terrible thing to have heart-ache,
I thought mine would break
As I heard the mother-bird's moan,
And looked at the grey-green, moss-coated, feather-lined nest she had
taken such pains to make,
And her three little children dead, and as cold as stone.
Mother said, and it's sadly true,
"There are some wrong things one can never undo."
And nothing that we could do or say
Would bring life back to the birds that day.

The bitterest tears that we could weep
Wouldn't wake them out of their stiff cold sleep.
But then,
We—Susan and Jem and I—mean never to be so selfish, and wilful,
and cruel again.
And we three have buried those other three
In a soft, green, moss-covered, flower-lined grave at the foot of
the willow tree.
And all the leaves which its branches shed
We think are tears because they are dead.

DOLLY'S LULLABY.

A NURSERY RHYME

Hush-a-by, Baby! *Your* baby, Mamma,
No one but pussy may go where you are;
Soft-footed pussy alone may pass by,
For, if he wakens, your baby will cry.

Page 7

Hush-a-by, Dolly! My baby are you,
Yellow-haired Dolly, with eyes of bright blue;
Though I say “Hush!” because Mother does so,
You wouldn’t cry like her baby, I know!

Hush-a-by, Baby! Mamma walks about,
Sings to you softly, or rocks you without;
If you slept sounder, then I might walk too,
Sing to my Dolly, and rock her like you!

Hush-a-by Dolly! Sleep sweetly, my pet!
Dear Mamma made you this fine berceaunette,
Muslin and rose-colour, ribbon and lace;
When had a baby a cosier place?

Hush-a-by, Baby! the baby who cries.
Why, dear Mamma, don’t you shut baby’s eyes?
Pull down his wire, as I do, you see;
Lay him by Dolly, and come out with me.

Hush-a-by, Dolly! Mamma will not speak;
You, my dear baby, would sleep for a week.
Poor Mamma’s baby allows her no rest,
Hush-a-by, Dolly, of babies the best!

[Illustration]

A HERO TO HIS HOBBY-HORSE.

Hear me now, my hobby-horse, my steed of prancing paces!
Time is it that you and I won something more than races.
I have got a fine cocked hat, with feathers proudly waving;
Out into the world we’ll go, both death and danger braving.

Doubt not that I know the way—the garden-gate is clapping:
Who forgot to lock it last deserves his fingers slapping.
When they find we can’t be found, oh won’t there be a chorus!
You and I may laugh at that, with all the world before us.

All the world, the great green world that lies beyond the paling!
All the sea, the great round sea where ducks and drakes are sailing!
I a knight, my charger thou, together we will wander
Out into that grassy waste where dwells the Goosey Gander.



Months ago, my faithful steed, that Goose attacked your master;
How it hissed, and how I cried! It ran, but I ran faster!
Down upon my face I fell, its awful wings were o'er me,
Mother came and picked me up, and off to bed she bore me.

Months have passed, my faithful steed, both you and I are older,
Sheathless is my wooden sword, my heart I think is bolder.
Always ready bridled thou, with reins of crimson leather;
Woe betide the Goose to-day who meets us both together!

Up then now, my hobby-horse, my steed of prancing paces!
Time it is that you and I won something more than races.
I a knight, my charger thou, together we will wander
Out into that grassy waste where dwells the Goosey Gander.

THE DOLLS' WASH.



Page 8

Sally is the laundress, and every Saturday
She sends our clean clothes up from the wash, and Nurse puts them away.
Sometimes Sally is very kind, but sometimes she's as cross as a Turk;
When she's good-humoured we like to go and watch her at work.
She has tubs and a copper in the wash-house, and a great big fire and
plenty of soap;
And outside is the drying-ground with tall posts, and pegs bought from
the gipsies, and long lines of rope.
The laundry is indoors with another big fire, and long tables, and a
lot of irons, and a crimping-machine;
And horses (not live ones with tails, but clothes-horses) and the same
starch that is used by the Queen.
Sally wears pattens in the wash-house, and turns up her sleeves, and
splashes, and rubs,
And makes beautiful white lather which foams over the tops of the tubs,
Like waves at the seaside dashing against the rocks, only not so
strong.
If I were Sally I should sit and blow soap-bubbles all the day long.
Sally is angry sometimes because of the way we dirty our frocks,
Making mud pies, and rolling down the lawn, and climbing trees, and
scrambling over the rocks.
She says we do it on purpose, and never try to take care;
But if things have got to go to the wash, what can it matter how
dirty they are?
Last week Mary and I got a lot of kingcups from the bog, and I
carried them home in my skirt;
It was the end of the week, and our frocks were done, so we didn't
mind about the dirt.
But Sally was as cross as two sticks, and won't wash our dolls'
clothes any more—so she said,—
But never mind, for we'll ask Mamma if we may have a real Dolls'
Wash of our own instead.

* * * * *

Mamma says we may on one condition, to which we agree;
We're to *really* wash the dolls' clothes, and make them just
what clean clothes should be.
She says we must wash them thoroughly, which of course we intend to do,
We mean to rub, wring, dry, mangle, starch, iron, and air them too.
A regular wash must be splendid fun, and everybody knows
That any one in the world can wash out a few dirty clothes.

* * * * *



Well, we've had the Dolls' Wash, but it's only pretty good fun.
We're glad we've had it, you know, but we're gladder still that
it's done.

As we wanted to have as big a wash as we could, we collected
everything we could muster,

From the dolls' bed dimity hangings to Victoria's dress, which I'd
used as a duster.

It was going to the wash, and Mary and I were house-maids—fancy
house-maids, I mean—

And I took it to dust the bookshelf, for I knew it would come back
clean.

Well, we washed in the wash-hand-basin, which holds a good deal, as
the things are small;

We made a glorious lather, and splashed half over the floor; but the



Page 9

clothes weren't white after all.

However, we hung them out in our drying-ground in the garden, which we made with dahlia-sticks and long strings,

And then Dash went and knocked over one of the posts, and down in the dirt went our things!

So we washed them again and hung them on the towel-horse, and most of them came all right,

But Victoria's muslin dress—though I rinsed it again and again—will never dry white!

And the grease-spots on Mary's doll's dress don't seem to come out, and we can't think how they got there;

Unless it was when we made that Macassar-oil, because she has real hair.

I knew mine was going to the wash, but I'm sorry I used it as a duster before it went;

We think dirty clothes perhaps shouldn't be *too* dirty before they are sent.

We had sad work in trying to make the starch—I wonder what the Queen does with hers?

I stirred mine up with a candle, like Sally, but it only made it worse;

So we had to ask Mamma's leave to have ours made by Nurse.

Nurse makes beautiful starch—like water-arrowroot when you're ill—in a minute or two.

It's a very odd thing that what looks so easy should be so difficult to do!

Then Mary put the iron down to heat, but as soon as she'd turned her back,

A jet of gas came sputtering out of the coals and smoked it black.

We dared not ask Sally for another, for we knew she'd refuse it,

So we had to clean this one with sand and brown-paper before we could use it.

It was very hard work, but I rubbed till I made it shine;

Yet as soon as it got on a damped "fine thing" it left a brown line.

I rubbed it for a long, long time before it would iron without a mark,

But it did at last, and we finished our Dolls' Wash just before dark.

* * * * *

Sally's very kind, for she praised our wash, and she has taken away Victoria's dress to do it again; and I really must say



She was right when she said, “You see, young ladies, a week’s wash isn’t all play.”

Our backs ache, our faces are red, our hands are all wrinkled, and we’ve rubbed our fingers quite sore;

We feel very sorry for Sally every week, and we don’t mean to dirty our dresses so much any more.

[Illustration]

HOUSE-BUILDING AND REPAIRS.

Father is building a new house, but I’ve had one given to me for my own;

Brick red, with a white window, and black where it ought to be glass, and the chimney yellow, like stone.

Brother Bill made me the shelves with his tool-box, and the table I had before, and the pestle-and-mortar;

And Mother gave me the jam-pot when it was empty; it’s rather big, but it’s the only pot we have that will really hold water.

We—that is I and Jemima, my doll. (For it’s a Doll’s House, you know, Though some of the things are real, like the nutmeg-grater,



Page 10

but not
the wooden plates that stand in a row.
They came out of a box of toy tea-things, and I can't think what
became of the others;
But one never can tell what becomes of anything when one has brothers.)
Jemima is much smaller than I am, and, being made of wood, she is thin;
She takes up too much room inside, but she can lie outside on the roof
without breaking it in.
I wish I had a drawing-room to put her in when I want to really cook;
I have to have the kitchen-table outside as it is, and the
pestle-and-mortar is rather too heavy for it, and everybody
can look.
There's no front door to the house, because there's no front to have a
door in, and beside,
If there were, I couldn't play with anything, for I shouldn't know how
to get inside.
I never heard of a house with only one room, except the cobbler's, and
his was a stall.
I don't quite know what that is; but it isn't a house, and it served
him for parlour and kitchen and all.
Father says that whilst he is about it, he thinks he shall add on
a wing;
And brother Bill says he'll nail my Doll's House on the top of an
old tea-chest, which will come to the same thing.

* * * * *

Father's house is not finished, though the wing is; for now the
builder says it will be all wrong if there isn't another
to match;
And my house isn't done either, though it's nailed on, for Bill took
off the roof to make a new one of thatch.
The paint is very much scratched, but he says that's nothing, for it
must have had a new coat;
And he means to paint it for me, inside and out, when he paints
his own boat.
There's a sad hole in the floor, but Bill says the wood is as rotten
as rotten can be:
Which was why he made such a mess of the side with trying to put real
glass in the window, through which one can see.
Bill says he believes that the shortest plan would be to make a new
Doll's House with proper rooms, in the regular way;



Which was what the builder said to Father when he wanted to build in the old front; and to-day

I heard him tell him the old materials were no good to use and weren't worth the expense of carting away.

I don't know when I shall be able to play at dolls again, for all the things are put away in a box;

Except Jemima and the pestle-and-mortar, and they're in the bottom drawer with my Sunday frocks.

I almost wish I had kept the house as it was before;

We managed very well with a painted window and without a front door.

I don't know what Father means to do with his house, but if ever mine is finished, I'll never have it altered any more.

THE BLUE-BELLS ON THE LEA.

FAIRY KING.



Page 11

“The breeze is on the Blue-bells,
The wind is on the lea;
Stay out! stay out! my little lad,
And chase the wind with me.
If you will give yourself to me,
Within the fairy ring,
At deep midnight,
When stars are bright,
You’ll hear the Blue-bells ring—
D!
DI! DIN!
DING!
On slender stems they swing.

“The rustling wind, the whistling wind,
We’ll chase him to and fro,
We’ll chase him up, we’ll chase him down
To where the King-cups grow;
And where old Jack-o’-Lantern waits
To light us on our way,
And far behind,
Upon the wind,
The Blue-bells seem to play—
D!
DI! DIN!
DING!
Lest we should go astray.

“So gay that fairy music,
So jubilant those bells,
How days and weeks and months go by
No happy listener tells!
The toad-stools are with sweetmeats spread,
The new Moon lends her light,
And ringers small
Wait, one and all,
To ring with all their might—
D!
DI! DIN!
DING!
And welcome you to night.”

BOY.



“My mother made me promise
To be in time for tea,
'Go home! go home!' the breezes say,
That sigh along the lea.
I dare not give myself away;
For what would Mother do?
I wish I might
Stay out all night
At fairy games with you.
D!
DI! DIN!
DING!
And hear the bells of blue.

“But Father sleeps beneath the grass,
And Mother is alone:
And who would fill the pails, and fetch
The wood when I am gone?
And who, when little Sister ails,
Can comfort her, but me?
Her cries and tears
Would reach my ears
Through all the melody—
D!
DI! DIN!
DING!
Of Blue-bells on the lea.”

The sun was on the Blue-bells,
The lad was on the lea.
“Oh, wondrous bells! Oh, fairy bells!
I pray you ring to me.
I only did as Mother bade,
For tea I did not care,
And winds at night
Give more delight
Than all this noonday glare.”
D!
DI! DIN!
DING!
No sound of bells was there.

BOY.

“The snow lies o'er the Blue-bells,
A storm is on the lea;
Our hearth is warm, the fire burns bright,



The flames dance merrily.
Oh, Mother dear! I would no more
That on that summer's day,
Within the ring,
The Fairy King
Had stolen me away—
D!
DI! DIN!
DING!
To where the Blue-bells play.

“Yet when the storm is loudest,
At deep midnight I dream,
And up and down upon the lea
To chase the wind I seem;
While by my side, in feathered cap,
There runs the Fairy King,
And down below,
Beneath the snow,
We hear the Blue-bells ring—
D!
DI! DIN!
DING!
Such happy dreams they bring!”

AN ONLY CHILD'S TEA-PARTY.



Page 12

When I go to tea with the little Smiths, there are eight of them there, but there's only one of me,
Which makes it not so easy to have a fancy tea-party as if there were two or three.

I had a tea-party on my birthday, but Joe Smith says it can't have been a regular one,

Because as to a tea-party with only one teacup and no teapot, sugar-basin, cream-jug, or slop-basin, he never heard of such a thing under the sun.

But it was a very big teacup, and quite full of milk and water, and, you see,

There wasn't anybody there who could really drink milk and water except Towser and me.

The dolls can only pretend, and then it washes the paint off their lips,

And what Charles the canary drinks isn't worth speaking of, for he takes such very small sips.

Joe says a kitchen-chair isn't a table; but it has got four legs and a top, so it would be if the back wasn't there;

And that does for Charles to perch on, and I have to put the Prince of Wales to lean against it, because his legs have no joints to sit on a chair.

[Illustration]

That's the small doll. I call him the Prince of Wales because he's the eldest son, you see;

For I've taken him for my brother, and he was Mother's doll before I was born, so of course he is older than me.

Towser is my real live brother, but I don't think he's as old as the Prince of Wales;

He's a perfect darling, though he whisks everything over he comes near, and I tell him I don't know what we should do if we all had tails.

His hair curls like mine in front, and grows short like a lion behind, but no one need be frightened, for he's as good as good;

And as to roaring like a real menagerie lion, or eating people up, I don't believe he would if he could.

He has his tea out of the saucer after I've had mine out of the cup; You see I am sure to leave some for him, but if I let him begin first he would drink it all up.

The big doll Godmamma gave me this birthday, and the chair she gave me the year before.

(I haven't many toys, but I take great care of them, and every birthday



I shall have more and more.)
You've no idea what a beautiful doll she is, and when I pinch her in
the middle, she can squeak;
It quite frightened Towser, for he didn't know that any of us but he
and I and Charles were able to speak.
I've taken her for my only sister, for of course I may take anybody
I choose;
I've called her Cinderella, because I'm so fond of the story, and
because she's got real shoes.
I don't feel so *only* now there are so many of us; for, counting
Cinderella there are five,—
She, and I, and Towser, and Charles, and the Prince of Wales—and
three of us are really alive;
And four of us can speak, and I'm sure the Prince of Wales is
wonderful for his size;
For his things (at least he's only got one



Page 13

thing) take off and on,
and, though he's nothing but wood, he's got real glass eyes.
And perhaps in three birthdays more there may be as many of us as the
Smiths, for five and three make eight;
I shall be seven years old then (as old as Joe), but I don't like
to think too much of it, it's so long to wait.
And after all I don't know that I want any more of us: I think I'd
rather my sister had a chair
Like mine; and the next year I should like a collar for Towser if
it wouldn't rub off his hair.
And it would be very nice if the Prince of Wales could be dressed
like a Field-marshal, for he's got nothing on his legs;
And Cinderella's beautifully dressed, and Towser looks quite as if
he'd got a fur coat on when he begs.
Joe says it's perfectly absurd, and that I can't take a Pomeranian
in earnest for my brother;
But I don't think he really and truly knows how much Towser and I
love each other.
I didn't like his saying, "Well, there's one thing about your lot,—you
can always have your own way."
And then he says, "You can't possibly have fun with four people when
you have to pretend what they say."
But, whatever he says, I don't believe I shall ever enjoy a tea-party
more than the one that we had on that day.

[Illustration]

PAPA POODLE.

Can any one look so wise, and have so little in his head?
How long will it be, Papa Poodle, before you have learned to read?
You were called Papa Poodle because you took care of me when I was
a baby:
And now I can read words of three syllables, and you sit with a book
before you like a regular gaby.
You've not read a word since I put you in that corner ten minutes ago;
Bill and I've fought the battle of Waterloo since dinner, and you've
not learned BA BE BI BO.
Here am I doing the whole British Army by myself, for Bill is obliged
to be the French;
And I've come away to hear you say your lesson, and left Bill waiting
for me in the trench.



And there you sit, with a curly white wig, like the Lord Chief Justice,
and as grave a face,
Looking the very picture of goodness and wisdom, when you're really in
the deepest disgrace.
Those woolly locks of yours grow thicker and thicker, Papa Poodle.
Does the wool tangle inside as well as outside your head? and is it
that which makes you such a noodle?
You seem so clever at some things, and so stupid at others, and I keep
wondering why;
But I'm afraid the truth is, Papa Poodle, that you're uncommonly sly.
You did no spelling-lessons last week, for you were out from morning
till night,
Except when you slunk in, like a dirty door-mat on legs, and with one
ear bleeding from a fight,
Looking as if you'd no notion what o'clock it was, and had come home
to see.
But *your watch keeps very good meal-time*, Papa Poodle, for you're



Page 14

always at breakfast, and dinner, and tea.

No, it's no good your shaking hands and licking me with your tongue,—I know you can do that;

But sitting up, and giving paws, and kissing, won't teach you to spell C A T, Cat.

I wonder, if I let you off lessons, whether I could teach you to pull the string with your teeth, and fire our new gun?

If I could, you might be the Artillery all to yourself, and it would be capital fun.

You wag your tail at that, do you? You would like it a great deal better?

But I can't bear you to be such a dunce, when you look so wise; and yet I don't believe you'll ever learn a letter.

Aunt Jemima is going to make me a new cocked hat out of the next old newspaper, for I want to have a review;

But the newspaper after that, Papa Poodle, must be kept to make a fool's cap for you.

GRANDMOTHER'S SPRING.

"In my young days," the grandmother said (Nodding her head, Where cap and curls were as white as snow),

"In my young days, when we used to go

Rambling,

Scrambling;

Each little dirty hand in hand,

Like a chain of daisies, a comical band

Of neighbours' children, seriously straying,

Really and truly going a-Maying,

My mother would bid us linger,

And lifting a slender, straight forefinger,

Would say—

'Little Kings and Queens of the May,

Listen to me!

If you want to be

Every one of you very good

In that beautiful, beautiful, beautiful wood,

Where the little birds' heads get so turned with delight,

That some of them sing all night:



Whatever you pluck,
Leave some for good luck;
Picked from the stalk, or pulled up by the root,
From overhead, or from underfoot,
Water-wonders of pond or brook;
Wherever you look,
And whatever you find—
Leave something behind:
Some for the Naiads,
Some for the Dryads,
And a bit for the Nixies, and the Pixies.”

“After all these years,” the grandame said,
Lifting her head,
“I think I can hear my mother’s voice
Above all other noise,
Saying, ‘Hearken, my child!
There is nothing more destructive and wild,
No wild bull with his horns,
No wild-briar with clutching thorns,
No pig that routs in your garden-bed,
No robber with ruthless tread,
More reckless and rude,
And wasteful of all things lovely and good,
Than a child, with the face of a boy and the ways of a bear,
Who *doesn’t care*;
Or some little ignorant minx
Who *never thinks*.
Now I never knew so stupid an elf,
That he couldn’t think and care for himself.
Oh, little sisters and little brothers,
Think for others, and care for others!
And of all that your little fingers find,



Page 15

Leave something behind,
For love of those that come after:
Some, perchance, to cool tired eyes in the moss that stifled your
laughter!
Pluck, children, pluck!
But leave—for good luck—
Some for the Naiads,
And some for the Dryads,
And a bit for the Nixies, and the Pixies!”

“We were very young,” the grandmother said,
Smiling and shaking her head;
“And when one is young,
One listens with half an ear, and speaks with a hasty tongue;
So with shouted Yeses,
And promises sealed with kisses,
Hand-in-hand we started again,
A chubby chain,
Stretching the whole wide width of the lane;
Or in broken links of twos and threes,
For greater ease
Of rambling,
And scrambling,
By the stile and the road,
That goes to the beautiful, beautiful wood;
By the brink of the gloomy pond,
To the top of the sunny hill beyond,
By hedge and by ditch, by marsh and by mead,
By little byways that lead
To mysterious bowers;
Or to spots where, for those who know,
There grow,
In certain out-o’-way nooks, rare ferns and uncommon flowers.
There were flowers everywhere,
Censing the summer air,
Till the giddy bees went rolling home
To their honeycomb,
And when we smelt at our posies,
The little fairies inside the flowers rubbed coloured dust on
our noses,



Or pricked us till we cried aloud for snuffing the dear dog-roses.
But above all our noise,
I kept thinking I heard my mother's voice.
But it may have been only a fairy joke,
For she was at home, and I sometimes thought it was
really the flowers that spoke.
From the Foxglove in its pride,
To the Shepherd's Purse by the bare road-side;
From the snap-jack heart of the Starwort frail,
To meadows full of Milkmaids pale,
And Cowslips loved by the nightingale.
Rosette of the tasselled Hazel-switch,
Sky-blue star of the ditch;
Dandelions like mid-day suns;
Bindweed that runs;
Butter and Eggs with the gaping lips,
Sweet Hawthorn that hardens to haws, and Roses that die into hips;
Lords-with-their-Ladies cheek-by-jowl,
In purple surcoat and pale-green cowl;
Family groups of Primroses fair;
Orchids rare;
Velvet Bee-orchis that never can sting,
Butterfly-orchis which never takes wing,
Robert-the-Herb with strange sweet scent,
And crimson leaf when summer is spent:
Clustering neighbourly,
All this gay company,
Said to us seemingly—
'Pluck, children, pluck!
But leave some for good luck:
Some for the Naiads,
Some for the Dryads,
And a bit for the Nixies, and the Pixies,'"



Page 16

“I was but a maid,” the grandame said,
“When my mother was dead;
And many a time have I stood.
In that beautiful wood,
To dream that through every woodland noise,
Through the cracking
Of twigs and the bending of bracken,
Through the rustling
Of leaves in the breeze,
And the bustling
Of dark-eyed, tawny-tailed squirrels flitting about the trees,
Through the purling and trickling cool
Of the streamlet that feeds the pool,
I could hear her voice.
Should I wonder to hear it? Why?
Are the voices of tender wisdom apt to die?
And now, though I’m very old,
And the air, that used to feel fresh, strikes chilly and cold,
On a sunny day when I potter
About the garden, or totter
To the seat from whence I can see, below,
The marsh and the meadows I used to know,
Bright with the bloom of the flowers that blossomed there long ago;
Then, as if it were yesterday,
I fancy I hear them say—
'Pluck, children, pluck,
But leave some for good luck;
Picked from the stalk, or pulled up by the root,
From overhead, or from underfoot,
Water-wonders of pond or brook;
Wherever you look,
And whatever your little fingers find,
Leave something behind:
Some for the Naiads,
And some for the Dryads,
And a bit for the Nixies, and the Pixies.”

The following note was given in *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, June 1880, when “Grandmother’s Spring” first appeared:—“It may interest old readers of *Aunt Judy's Magazine* to know that ‘Leave some for the Naiads and the Dryads’ was a favourite phrase with Mr. Alfred Gatty, and is not merely the charge of an imaginary mother to her ‘blue-eyed banditti.’ Whether my mother invented the expression for our benefit, or whether she only quoted it, I do not know. I only remember its use as a check on the



indiscriminate 'collecting' and 'grubbing' of a large family; a mystic warning not without force to fetter the same fingers in later life, with all the power of a pious tradition."—J.H.E.

[Illustration]

BIG SMITH.

Are you a Giant, great big man, or is your real name Smith?
Nurse says you've got a hammer that you hit bad children with.
I'm good to-day, and so I've come to see if it is true
That you can turn a red-hot rod into a horse's shoe.

Why do you make the horses' shoes of iron instead of leather?
Is it because they are allowed to go out in bad weather?
If horses should be shod with iron, Big Smith, will you shoe mine?
For now I may not take him out, excepting when it's fine.

Although he's not a real live horse, I'm very fond of him;
His harness won't take off and on, but still it's new and trim.
His tail is hair, he has four legs, but neither hoofs nor heels;
I think he'd seem more like a horse without these yellow wheels.



Page 17

They say that Dapple-grey's not yours, but don't you wish he were?
My horse's coat is only paint, but his is soft grey hair;
His face is big and kind, like yours, his forelock white as snow—
Shan't you be sorry when you've done his shoes and he must go?

I do so wish, Big Smith, that I might come and live with you;
To rake the fire, to heat the rods, to hammer two and two.
To be so black, and not to have to wash unless I choose;
To pat the dear old horses, and to mend their poor old shoes.

When all the world is dark at night, you work among the stars,
A shining shower of fireworks beat out of red-hot bars.
I've seen you beat, I've heard you sing, when I was going to bed;
And now your face and arms looked black, and now were glowing red.

The more you work, the more you sing, the more the bellows roar;
The falling stars, the flying sparks, stream shining more and more.
You hit so hard, you look so hot, and yet you never tire;
It must be very nice to be allowed to play with fire.

I long to beat and sing and shine, as you do, but instead
I put away my horse, and Nurse puts me away to bed.
I wonder if you go to bed; I often think I'll keep
Awake and see, but, though I try, I always fall asleep.

I know it's very silly, but I sometimes am afraid
Of being in the dark alone, especially in bed.
But when I see your forge-light come and go upon the wall,
And hear you through the window, I am not afraid at all.

I often hear a trotting horse, I sometimes hear it stop;
I hold my breath—you stay your song—it's at the blacksmith's shop.
Before it goes, I'm apt to fall asleep, Big Smith, it's true;
But then I dream of hammering that horse's shoes with you!

KIT'S CRADLE.

They've taken the cosy bed away
That I made myself with the Shetland shawl,
And set me a hamper of scratchy hay,
By that great black stove in the entrance-hall.

[Illustration]



I won't sleep there; I'm resolved on that!
They may think I will, but they little know
There's a soft persistence about a cat
That even a little kitten can show.

I wish I knew what to do but pout,
And spit at the dogs and refuse my tea;
My fur's feeling rough, and I rather doubt
Whether stolen sausage agrees with me.

On the drawing-room sofa they've closed the door,
They've turned me out of the easy-chairs;
I wonder it never struck me before
That they make their beds for themselves up-stairs.

* * * * *

I've found a crib where they won't find me,
Though they're crying "Kitty!" all over the house.
Hunt for the Slipper! and riddle-my-ree!
A cat can keep as still as a mouse.



Page 18

It's rather unwise perhaps to purr,
But they'll never think of the wardrobe-shelves.
I'm happy in every hair of my fur;
They may keep the hamper and hay themselves.

[Illustration]

THE MILL STREAM.

One of a hundred little rills—
Born in the hills,
Nourished with dews by the earth, and with tears by the sky,
Sang—"Who so mighty as I?
The farther I flow
The bigger I grow.
I, who was born but a little rill,
Now turn the big wheel of the mill,
Though the surly slave would rather stand still.
Old, and weed-hung, and grim,
I am not afraid of him;
For when I come running and dance on his toes,
With a creak and a groan the monster goes.
And turns faster and faster,
As he learns who is master,
Round and round,
Till the corn is ground,
And the miller smiles as he stands on the bank,
And knows he has me to thank.
Then when he swings the fine sacks of flour,
I feel my power;
But when the children enjoy their food,
I know I'm not only great but good!"

Furthermore sang the brook—
"Who loves the beautiful, let him look!
Garlanding me in shady spots
The Forget-me-nots
Are blue as the summer sky:
Who so lovely as I?
My King-cups of gold
Shine from the shade of the alders old,
Stars of the stream!—
At the water-rat's threshold they gleam.
From below



The Frog-bit spreads me its blossoms of snow,
And in masses
The Willow-herb, the flags, and the grasses,
Reeds, rushes, and sedges,
Flower and fringe and feather my edges.
To be beautiful is not amiss,
But to be loved is more than this;
And who more sought than I,
By all that run or swim or crawl or fly?
Sober shell-fish and frivolous gnats,
Tawny-eyed water-rats;
The poet with rippling rhymes so fluent,
Boys with boats playing truant,
Cattle wading knee-deep for water;
And the flower-plucking parson's daughter.
Down in my depths dwell creeping things
Who rise from my bosom on rainbow wings,
For—too swift for a school-boy's prize—
Hither and thither above me dart the prismatic-hued dragon-flies.
At my side the lover lingers,
And with lack-a-daisical fingers,
The Weeping Willow, woe-begone,
Strives to stay me as I run on."

There came an hour
When all this beauty and love and power
Did seem
But a small thing to that Mill Stream.
And then his cry
Was, "Why, oh! why
Am I thus surrounded
With checks and limits, and bounded
By bank and border
To keep me in order,
Against my will?
I, who was born to be free and unfettered—a mountain rill!
But for these jealous banks, the good
Of my gracious and fertilizing flood



Page 19

Might spread to the barren highways,
And fill with Forget-me-nots countless neglected byways.
Why should the rough-barked Willow for ever lave
Her feet in my cooling wave;
When the tender and beautiful Beech
Faints with midsummer heat in the meadow just out of my reach?
Could I but rush with unchecked power,
The miller might grind a day's corn in an hour.
And what are the ends
Of life, but to serve one's friends?"

A day did dawn at last,
When the spirits of the storm and the blast,
Breaking the bands of the winter's frost and snow,
Swept from the mountain source of the stream, and flooded the
valley below.
Dams were broken and weirs came down;
Cottage and mill, country and town,
Shared in the general inundation,
And the following desolation.
Then the Mill Stream rose in its might,
And burst out of bounds to left and to right,
Rushed to the beautiful Beech,
In the meadow far out of reach.
But with such torrents the poor tree died,
Torn up by the roots, and laid on its side.
The cattle swam till they sank,
Trying to find a bank.
Never more shall the broken water-wheel
Grind the corn to make the meal,
To make the children's bread.
The miller was dead.

When the setting sun
Looked to see what the Mill Stream had done
In its hour
Of unlimited power,
And what was left when that had passed by,
Behold the channel was stony and dry.
In uttermost ruin



The Mill Stream had been its own undoing.
Furthermore it had drowned its friend:
This was the end.

[Illustration]

BOY AND SQUIRREL.

Oh boy, down there, I can't believe that what they say is true!
We squirrels surely cannot have an enemy in you;
We have so much in common, my dear friend, it seems to me
That I can really feel for you, and you can feel for me.

Some human beings might not understand the life we lead;
If we asked Dr. Birch to play, no doubt he'd rather read;
He hates all scrambling restlessness, and chattering, scuffling noise;
If he could catch us we should fare no better than you boys.

Fine ladies, too, whose flounces catch and tear on every stump,
What joy have they in jagged pines, who neither skip nor jump?
Miss Mittens never saw my tree-top home—so unlike hers;
What wonder if her only thought of squirrels is of furs?

But you, dear boy, you know so well the bliss of climbing trees,
Of scrambling up and sliding down, and rocking in the breeze,
Of cracking nuts and chewing cones, and keeping cunning hoards,
And all the games and all the sport and fun a wood affords.



Page 20

It cannot be that you would make a prisoner of me, Who hate yourself to be cooped up,
who love so to be free; An extra hour indoors, I know, is punishment to you; *You* make
me twirl a tiny cage? It never can be true!

Yet I've a wary grandfather, whose tail is white as snow.
He thinks he knows a lot of things we young ones do not know;
He says we're safe with Doctor Birch, because he is so blind,
And that Miss Mittens would not hurt a fly, for she is kind.

But you, dear boy, who know my ways, he bids me fly from you,
He says my life and liberty are lost unless I do;
That you, who fear the Doctor's cane, will fling big sticks at me,
And tear me from my forest home, and from my favourite tree.

The more we think of what he says, the more we're sure it's "chaff,"
We sit beneath the shadow of our bushy tails and laugh;
Hey, presto! Friend, come up, and let us hide and seek and play,
If you could spring as well as climb, what fun we'd have to-day!

LITTLE MASTER TO HIS BIG DOG.

Oh, how greedy you look as you stare at my plate,
Your mouth waters so, and your big tail is drumming
Flop! flop! flop! on the carpet, and yet if you'll wait,
When we have quite finished, your dinner is coming.

Yes! I know what you mean, though you don't speak a word;
You say that you wish that I kindly would let you
Take your meals with the family, which is absurd,
And on a tall chair like a gentleman set you.

But how little you think, my dear dog, when you talk;
You've no "table manners," you bolt meat, you gobble;
And how could you eat bones with a knife, spoon, and fork?
You would be in a most inconvenient hobble.

And yet, once on a time it is certainly true,
My own manners wanted no little refining;
For I gobbled, and spilled, and was greedy like you,
And had no idea of good manners when dining.

So that when I consider the tricks *you* have caught,
To sit or shake paws with the utmost good breeding,



I must own it quite possible you may be taught
The use of a plate, and a nice style of feeding.

Therefore try to learn manners, and eat as I do;
Don't glare at the joint, and as soon as you're able
To behave like the rest, you shall feed with us too,
And dine like a gentleman sitting at table.

[Illustration]

A SWEET LITTLE DEAR

I always *was* a remarkable child; so old for my age, and such a sensitive nature!—Mamma often says so.
And I'm the sweetest, little dear in my blue ribbons, and quite a picture in my Pompadour hat!—Mrs. Brown told her so on



Page 21

Sunday, and that's how I know.

And I'm a sacred responsibility to my parents—(it was what the clergyman's wife at the seaside said),

And a solemn charge, and a fair white page, and a tender bud, and a spotless nature of wax to be moulded;—but the rest of it has gone out of my head.

There was a lot more, and she left two books as well, and I think she called me a Privilege, and Mamma said "Yes," and began to cry.

And Nurse came in with luncheon on a tray, and put away the books, and said she was as weak as a kitten, and worried to fiddlestrings, as any one with common sense could see with half an eye.

I was hopping round the room, but I stopped and said, "My kitten's not weak, and I don't believe anybody could see with only half an eye. Could they, Mamma?"

And Nurse said, "Go and play, my dear, and let your Mamma rest;" but Mamma said, "No, my love, stay where you are.

Dear Nurse, lift me up, and put a pillow to my back, I know you mean to be kind;

But she does ask such remarkable questions, and while I've strength to speak, don't let me check the inquiring mind.

If I should fail to be all a mother ought—oh, how my head throbs when the dear child jumps!" and then Nurse said, "Ugh!

When you're worried into your grave, she'll have no mother at all, and'll have to tumble up as other folks do.

There's the poor master at his wits' end—a child's not all a grown person has to think of—and Miss Jane would do well enough if she'd less of her own way;

But there's more children spoilt with care than the want of it, and more mothers murdered than there's folks hanged for, and that's what I say.

Children learns what you teach 'em, and Miss Jane's old enough to have learned to wait upon you:

And if her mother thought less of her and she thought more of her mother, it would be better for her too."

But Nurse is a nasty cross old thing—I hate her; and I hate the doctor, for he wanted me to be left behind

When Mamma went to the sea for her health; but I begged and begged till she promised I should go, for Mamma is always kind.

And she bought me a new wooden spade and a basket, and a red and green



ship with three masts, and a one-and-sixpenny telescope to look at the sea;

But when I got on to the sands, I thought I'd rather be on the esplanade, for there was a little girl there who was looking at me,

Dressed in a navy-blue suit and a sailor hat, with fair hair tied with ribbons; so I told Mamma,

And she got me a suit, ready-made (but she said it was dreadfully dear), and a hat to match, in the Pebble Brooch Repository and Universal Bazaar.

It faded in the sun, and came all to pieces in the wash; but I was tired of it before.

For the esplanade is very dull, and the little girl with fair hair had got sand-boots and a shrimping-net and was playing on

Page 22

the shore.

And when my sand-boots came home, and I'd got a better net than hers,
she went donkey-riding, and I knew it was to tease me,

But Nurse was so cross, and said if they sent a man in a herring-boat
to the moon for what I wanted that nothing would please me.

So I said the seaside was a very disagreeable place, and I wished I
hadn't come,

And I told Mamma so, and begged her to try and get well soon, to take
us all home.

But now we've got home, it's very hot, and I'm afraid of the wasps;
and I'm sure it was cooler at the sea,

And the Smiths won't be back for a fortnight, so I can't even have
Matilda to tea.

I don't care much for my new doll—I think I'm too old for dolls now;

I like books better, though I didn't like the last,

And I've read all I have: I always skip the dull parts, and when you
skip a good deal you get through them so fast.

I like toys if they're the best kind, with works; though when I've had
one good game with them, I don't much care to play with
them again.

I feel as if I wanted something new to amuse me, and Mamma says it's
because I've got such an active brain.

Nurse says I don't know what I want, and I know I don't, and that's
just what it is.

It seems so sad a young creature like me should feel unhappy, and not
know what's amiss;

But Nurse never thinks of my feelings, any more than the cruel nurse
in the story about the little girl who was so good,

And if I die early as she did, perhaps then people will be sorry I've
been misunderstood.

I shouldn't like to die early, but I should like people to be sorry
for me, and to praise me when I was dead:

If I could only come to life again when they had missed me very much,
and I'd heard what they said—

Of course that's impossible, I know, but I wish I knew what to
do instead!

It seems such a pity that a sweet little dear like me should
ever be sad.

And Mamma says she buys everything I want, and has taught me
everything I will learn, and reads every book, and takes



every hint she can pick up, and keeps me with her all day,
and worries about me all night, till she's nearly mad;
And if any kind person can think of any better way to make me happy
we shall both of us be glad.

BLUE AND RED:
OR, THE DISCONTENTED LOBSTER.

Permit me, Reader, to make my bow,
And allow
Me to humbly commend to your tender mercies
The hero of these simple verses.
By domicile, of the British Nation;
By birth and family, a Crustacean.
One's hero should have a name that rare is;
And his was *Homarus*, but—*Vulgaris!*
A Lobster, who dwelt with several others,—
His sisters and brothers,—
In a secluded but happy home,
Under the salt sea's foam.
It lay
At the outermost point of a rocky bay.
A sandy, tide-pooly, cliff-bound cove,

Page 23

With a red-roofed fishing village above,
Of irregular cottages, perched up high
Amid pale yellow poppies next to the sky.
Shells and pebbles, and wrack below,
And shrimpers shrimping all in a row;
Tawny sails and tarry boats,
Dark brown nets and old cork floats;
Nasty smells at the nicest spots,
And blue-jerseyed sailors and—lobster-pots.

“It is sweet to be
At home in the deep, deep sea.
It is very pleasant to have the power
To take the air on dry land for an hour;
And when the mid-day midsummer sun
Is toasting the fields as brown as a bun,
And the sands are baking, it’s very nice
To feel as cool as a strawberry ice
In one’s own particular damp sea-cave,
Dipping one’s feelers in each green wave.
It is good, for a very rapacious maw,
When storm-tossed morsels come to the claw;
And ‘the better to see with’ down below,
To wash one’s eyes in the ebb and flow
Of the tides that come and the tides that go.”
So sang the Lobsters, thankful for their mercies,
All but the hero of these simple verses.

Now a hero—
If he’s worth the grand old name—
Though temperature may change from boiling-point to zero
Should keep his temper all the same:
Courageous and content in his estate,
And proof against the spiteful blows of Fate.
It, therefore, troubles me to have to say,
That with this Lobster it was never so;
Whate’er the weather or the sort of day,
No matter if the tide were high or low,
Whatever happened he was never pleased,
And not himself alone, but all his kindred teased.



“Oh! oh!
What a world of woe
We flounder about in, here below!
Oh dear! oh dear!
It is too, too dull, down here!
I haven’t the slightest patience
With any of my relations;
I take no interest whatever
In things they call curious and clever.
And, for love of dear truth I state it,
As for my Home—I hate it!
I’m convinced I was formed for a larger sphere,
And am utterly out of my element here.”
Then his brothers and sisters said,
Each solemnly shaking his and her head,
“You put your complaints in most beautiful verse,
And yet we are sure,
That, in spite of all you have to endure,
You might go much farther and fare much worse.
We wish you could live in a higher sphere,
But we think you might live happily here.”
“I don’t live, I only exist,” he said,
“Be pleased to look upon me as dead.”
And he swam to his cave, and took to his bed.
He sulked so long that the sisters cried,
“Perhaps he has really and truly died.”
But the brothers went to the cave to peep,
For they said, “Perhaps he is only asleep.”
They found him, far too busy to talk,
With a very large piece of bad salt pork.
“Dear Brother, what luck you have had to-day!
Can you tell us, pray,
Is there any more pork afloat in the bay?”
But not a word would my hero say,
Except to repeat, with sad persistence,
“This is not life, it’s only existence.”



Page 24

One day there came to the fishing village
An individual bent on pillage;
But a robber whom true scientific feeling
May find guilty of picking, but not of stealing.
He picked the yellow poppies on the cliffs;
He picked the feathery seaweeds in the pools;
He picked the odds and ends from nets and skiffs;
He picked the brains of all the country fools.
He dried the poppies for his own herbarium,
And caught the Lobsters for a seaside town aquarium.

“Tank No. 20” is deep,
“Tank No. 20” is cool,
For clever contrivances always keep
The water fresh in the pool;
And a very fine plate-glass window is free to the public view,
Through which you can stare at the passers-by and the passers-by
stare at you.
Said my hero, “This is a great variety
From those dull old rocks, where we’d no society.”

For the primal cause of incidents,
One often hunts about,
When it’s only a coincidence
That matters so turned out.
And I do not know the reason
Or the reason I would tell—
But it may have been the season—
Why my hero chose this moment for casting off his shell.
He had hitherto been dressed^[1]
(And so had all the rest)
In purplish navy blue from top to toe!
But now his coat was new,
It was of every shade of blue
Between azure and the deepest indigo;
And his sisters kept telling him, till they were tired,
There never was any one so much admired.

My hero was happy at last, you will say?
So he was, dear Reader—two nights and a day;
Then, as he and his relatives lay,
Each at the mouth of his mock
Cave in the face of a miniature rock,
They saw, descending the opposite cliff,



By jerks spasmodic of elbows stiff;
Now hurriedly slipping, now seeming calmer,
With the ease and the grace of a hog in armour,
And as solemn as any ancient palmer,

No less than nine

Exceedingly fine

And full-grown lobsters, all in a line.
But the worst of the matter remains to be said.
These nine big lobsters were all of them *red*.^[2]
And when they got safe to the floor of the tank,—
For which they had chiefly good luck to thank,—
They settled their cumbersome coats of mail,
And every lobster tucked his tail
Neatly under him as he sat
In a circle of nine for a cosy chat.
They seemed to be sitting hand in hand,
As shoulder to shoulder they sat in the sand,
And waved their antennae in calm rotation,
Apparently holding a consultation.
But what were the feelings of Master Blue Shell?
Oh, gentle Reader! how shall I tell?



Page 25

[Footnote 1: The colours of lobsters vary a good deal in various localities. *Homarus vulgaris*, the common lobster, is spotted, and, on the upper part, more or less of a bluish black. I once saw a lobster that had just got a new shell, and was of every lovely shade of blue and violet.][Footnote 2: *Palurinus vulgaris*, the spiny lobster, has no true claws, but huge hairy antennae. These lobsters are red *during their lifetime!* I have seen them (in the Crystal Palace Aquarium) seated exactly as here described, with blue lobsters watching them from niches of the rocky sides of the tank, where they looked like blue-jerseyed smugglers at the mouths of caves.]

From the moment that those Nine he saw,
He never could bear his blue coat more.
"Oh, Brothers in misfortune!" he said,
"Did you ever see any lobsters so grand,
As those who sit down there in the sand?
Why were we born at all, since not one of us all was born red?"
"Dear Brother, indeed, this is quite a whim."
(So his brothers and sisters reasoned with him;
And, being exceedingly cultivated,
The case with remarkable fairness stated.)
"Red is a primary colour, it's true,
 But so is Blue;
And we all of us think, dear Brother,
That one is quite as good as the other.
A swaggering soldier's a saucy varlet,
Though he looks uncommonly well in scarlet.
No doubt there's much to be said
For a field of poppies of glowing red;
For fiery rifts in sunset skies,
Roses and blushes and red sunrise;
For a glow on the Alps, and the glow of a forge,
A foxglove bank in a woodland gorge;
Sparks that are struck from red-hot bars,
The sun in a mist, and the red star Mars;
Flowers of countless shades and shapes,
Matadors', judges', and gipsies' capes;
The red-haired king who was killed in the wood,
Robin Redbreast and little Red Riding Hood;
Autumn maple, and winter holly,
Red-letter days of wisdom or folly;
The scarlet ibis, rose cockatoos,
Cardinal's gloves, and Karen's shoes;
Coral and rubies, and huntsmen's pink;
Red, in short, is splendid, we think.



But, then, we don't think there's a pin to choose;
If the Guards are handsome, so are the Blues.
It's a narrow choice between Sappers and Gunners.
You sow blue beans, and rear scarlet runners.
Then think of the blue of a mid-day sky,
Of the sea, and the hills, and a Scotchman's eye;
Of peacock's feathers, forget-me-nots,
Worcester china and "jap" tea-pots.
The blue that the western sky wears casually,
Sapphire, turquoise, and lapis-lazuli.

What can look smarter
Than the broad blue ribbon of Knights of the Garter?



Page 26

And, if the subject is not too shocking,
An intellectual lady's stocking.

And who that loves hues
Could fail to mention
The wonderful blues
Of the mountain gentian?"

But to all that his brothers and sisters said,
He made no reply but—"I wish I were dead!
I'm all over blue, and I want to be red."
And he moped and pined, and took to his bed.
"That little one looks uncommonly sickly,
Put him back in the sea, and put him back quickly."
The voice that spoke was the voice of Fate,
And the lobster was soon in his former state;
Where, as of old, he muttered and mumbled,
And growled and grumbled:
"Oh dear! what shall I do?
I want to be red, and I'm all over blue."

I don't think I ever met with a book
The evil genius of which was a cook;
But it thus befell,
In the tale I have the honour to tell;
For as he was fretting and fuming about,
A fisherman fished my hero out;
And in process of time, he heard a voice,
Which made him rejoice.
The voice was the cook's, and what she said
Was, "He'll soon come out a beautiful red."

He was put in the pot,
The water was very hot;
The less we say about this the better,
It was all fulfilled to the very letter.
He did become a beautiful red,
But then—which he did not expect—he was dead!

Some gentle readers cannot well endure
To see the ill end of a bad beginning;
And hope against hope for a nicer cure



For naughty heroes than to leave off sinning.
And yet persisting in behaving badly,
Do what one will, does commonly end sadly.

But things in general are so much mixed,
That every case must stand upon its merits;
And folks' opinions are so little fixed,
And no one knows the least what he inherits—
I should be glad to shed some parting glory
Upon the hero of this simple story.

It seems to me a mean end to a ballad,
But the truth is, he was made into salad;
It's not how one's hero should end his days,
In a mayonnaise,
But I'm told that he looked exceedingly nice,
With cream-coloured sauce, and pale-green lettuce and ice.

I confess that if he'd been my relation,
This would not afford me any consolation;
For I feel (though one likes to speak well of the dead)
That it must be said,
He need not have died so early lamented,
If he'd been content to live contented.

P.S.—His claws were raised to very high stations;
They keep the earwigs from our carnations.

THE YELLOW FLY.

A TALE WITH A STING IN IT.

[Illustration]

Ah!
There you are!
I was certain I heard a strange voice from afar.
Mamma calls me a pup, but I'm wiser than she;
One ear cocked and I hear, half an eye and I see;
Wide-awake though I doze, not a thing escapes me.



Page 27

Yes!

Let me guess:

It's the stable-boy's hiss as he wisps down Black Bess.
It sounds like a kettle beginning to sing,
Or a bee on a pane, or a moth on the wing,
Or my master's peg-top, just let loose from the string.

[Illustration]

Well!

Now I smell,
I don't know who you are, and I'm puzzled to tell.
You look like a fly dressed in very gay clothes,
But I blush to have troubled my mid-day repose
For a creature not worth half a twitch of my nose.

[Illustration]

How now?

Bow, wow, wow!
The insect imagines we're playing, I vow!
If I pat you, I promise you'll find it too hard.
Be off! when a watch-dog like me is on guard,
Big or little, no stranger's allowed in the yard.

Eh?

"Come away!"
My dear little master, is that what you say?
I am greatly obliged for your kindness and cares,
But I really can manage my own small affairs,
And banish intruders who give themselves airs.

[Illustration]

Snap!

Yap! yap! yap!
You defy me?—you pigmy, you insolent scrap!
What!—this to my teeth, that have worried a score
Of the biggest rats bred in the granary floor!
Come on, and be swallowed! I spare you no more!

Help!

Yelp! yelp! yelp!
Little master, pray save an unfortunate whelp,



Who began the attack, but is now in retreat,
Having shown all his teeth, just escapes on his feet,
And is trusting to you to make safety complete.

[Illustration]

Oh!
Let me go!
My poor eye! my poor ear! my poor tail! my poor toe!
Pray excuse my remarks, for I meant no such thing.
Don't trouble to come—oh, the brute's on the wing!
I'd no notion, I'm sure, there were flies that could sting.

Dear me!
I can't see.
My nose burns, my limbs shake, I'm as ill as can be.
I was never in such an undignified plight.
Mamma told me, and now I suppose she was right;
One should know what one's after before one shows fight.

[Illustration]

CANADA HOME.

Some Homes are where flowers for ever blow,
The sun shining hotly the whole year round;
But our Home glistens with six months of snow,
Where frost without wind heightens every sound.
And Home is Home wherever it is,
When we're all together and nothing amiss.

Yet Willy is old enough to recall
A Home forgotten by Eily and me;
He says that we left it five years since last Fall,
And came sailing, sailing, right over the sea.
But Home is Home wherever it is,
When we're all together and nothing amiss.

Our other Home was for ever green,
A green, green isle in a blue, blue sea,
With sweet flowers such as we never have seen;
And Willy tells all this to Eily and me.
But Home is Home wherever it is,
When we're all together and nothing amiss.



Page 28

He says, "What fine fun when we all go back!"
But Canada Home is very good fun
When Pat's little sled flies along the smooth track,
Or spills in the snowdrift that shines in the sun.
For Home is Home wherever it is,
When we're all together and nothing amiss.

Some day I should dearly love, it is true,
To sail to the old Home over the sea;
But only if Father and Mother went too,
With Willy and Patrick and Eily and me.
For Home is Home wherever it is,
When we're all together and nothing amiss.

THE POET AND THE BROOK.

A TALE OF TRANSFORMATIONS.

A little Brook, that babbled under grass,
Once saw a Poet pass—
A Poet with long hair and saddened eyes,
Who went his weary way with woeful sighs.
And on another time,
This Brook did hear that Poet read his rueful rhyme.
Now in the poem that he read,
This Poet said—
"Oh! little Brook that babblest under grass!
(*Ah me! Alack! Ah, well-a-day! Alas!*)
Say, are you what you seem?
Or is your life, like other lives, a dream?
What time your babbling mocks my mortal moods,
Fair Naiad of the stream!
And are you, in good sooth,
Could purblind poesy perceive the truth,
A water-sprite,
Who sometimes, for man's dangerous delight,
Puts on a human form and face,
To wear them with a superhuman grace?

"When this poor Poet turns his bending back,
(*Ah me! Ah, well-a-day! Alas! Alack!*)
Say, shall you rise from out your grassy bed,
With wreathed forget-me-nots about your head,
And sing and play,



And wile some wandering wight out of his way,
To lead him with your witcheries astray?
(Ah me! Alas! Alack! Ah, well-a-day!)
Would it be safe for me
That fateful form to see?"
(Alas! Alack! Ah, well-a-day! Ah me!)

So far the Poet read his pleasing strain,
Then it began to rain:
He closed his book.
"Farewell, fair Nymph!" he cried, as with a lingering look
His homeward way he took;
And nevermore that Poet saw that Brook.

The Brook passed several days in anxious expectation
Of transformation
Into a lovely nymph bedecked with flowers;
And longed impatiently to prove those powers—
Those dangerous powers—of witchery and wile,
That should all mortal men mysteriously beguile;
For life as running water lost its charm
Before the exciting hope of doing so much harm.
And yet the hope seemed vain;
Despite the Poet's strain,
Though the days came and went, and went and came,
The seasons changed, the Brook remained the same.



Page 29

The Brook was almost tired
Of vainly hoping to become a Naiad;
When on a certain Summer's day,
Dame Nature came that way,
Busy as usual,
With great and small;
Who, at the water-side
Dipping her clever fingers in the tide,
Out of the mud drew creeping things,
And, smiling on them, gave them radiant wings.
Now when the poor Brook murmured, "Mother dear!"
Dame Nature bent to hear,
And the sad stream poured all its woes into her sympathetic ear,
Crying,—“Oh, bounteous Mother!
Do not do more for one child than another;
If of a dirty grub or two
(Dressing them up in royal blue)
You make so many shining Demoiselles,[3]
Change me as well;
Uplift me also from this narrow place,
Where life runs on at such a petty pace;
Give me a human form, dear Dame, and then
See how I'll flit, and flash, and fascinate the race of men!”

[Footnote 3: The “Demoiselle” Dragon-fly, a well-known slender variety (*Libellula*), with body of brilliant blue.]

Then Mother Nature, who is wondrous wise,
Did that deluded little Brook advise
To be contented with its own fair face,
 And with a good and cheerful grace,
Run, as of yore, on its appointed race,
Safe both from giving and receiving harms;
Outliving human lives, outlasting human charms.
But good advice, however kind,
Is thrown away upon a made-up mind,
And this was all that babbling Brook would say—
“Give me a human face and form, if only for a day!”

Then quoth Dame Nature:—“Oh, my foolish child!
Ere I fulfil a wish so wild,
Since I am kind and you are ignorant,
This much I grant:
You shall arise from out your grassy bed,



And gathered to the waters overhead
Shall thus and then
Look down and see the world, and all the ways of men!"
Scarce had the Dame
Departed to the place from whence she came,
When in that very hour,
The sun burst forth with most amazing power.
Dame Nature bade him blaze, and he obeyed;
He drove the fainting flocks into the shade,
He ripened all the flowers into seed,
He dried the river, and he parched the mead;
Then on the Brook he turned his burning eye,
Which rose and left its narrow channel dry;
And, climbing up by sunbeams to the sky,
Became a snow-white cloud, which softly floated by.

It was a glorious Autumn day,
And all the world with red and gold was gay;
When, as this cloud athwart the heavens did pass,
Lying below, it saw a Poet on the grass,
The very Poet who had such a stir made,
To prove the Brook was a fresh-water mermaid.
And now,
Holding his book above his corrugated brow—
He read aloud,
And thus apostrophized the passing cloud:
"Oh, snowy-breasted Fair!
Mysterious messenger of upper air!
Can you be of those female forms so dread,[4]



Page 30

Who bear the souls of the heroic dead
To where undying laurels crown the warrior's head?
Or, as you smile and hover,
Are you not rather some fond goddess of the skies who waits a mortal
lover?
And who, ah! who is he?
—And what, oh, what!—your message to poor me?"—
So far the Poet. Then he stopped:
His book had dropped.
But ere the delighted cloud could make reply,
Dame Nature hurried by,
And it put forth a wild beseeching cry—
"Give me a human face and form!"
Dame Nature frowned, and all the heavens grew black with storm.

[Footnote 4: The Valkyrie in Teutonic mythology, whose office it is to bear the souls of fallen heroes from the field of battle.]

But very soon,
Upon a frosty winter's noon,
The little cloud returned below,
Falling in flakes of snow;
Falling most softly on the floor most hard
Of an old manor-house court-yard.
And as it hastened to the earth again,
The children sang behind the window-pane:
"Old woman, up yonder, plucking your geese,
Quickly pluck them, and quickly cease;
Throw down the feathers, and when you have done,
We shall have fun—we shall have fun."
The snow had fallen, when with song and shout
The girls and boys came out;
Six sturdy little men and maids,
Carrying heather-brooms, and wooden spades,
Who swept and shovelled up the fallen snow,
Which whimpered,—“Oh! oh! oh!
Oh, Mother, most severe!
Pity me lying here,
I'm shaken all to pieces with that storm,
Raise me and clothe me in a human form.”



They swept up much, they shovelled up more,
There never was such a snow-man before!
They built him bravely with might and main,
There never will be such a snow-man again!
His legs were big, his body was bigger,
They made him a most imposing figure;
His eyes were large and as black as coal,
For a cinder was placed in each round hole.
And the sight of his teeth would have made yours ache,
Being simply the teeth of an ancient rake.
They smoothed his forehead, they patted his back,
There wasn't a single unsightly crack;
And when they had given the final pat,
They crowned his head with the scare-crow's hat.

And so
The Brook—the Cloud—the Snow,
Got its own way after so many days,
And did put on a human form and face.
But whether
The situation pleased it altogether;
If it is nice
To be a man of snow and ice;
Whether it feels
Painful, when one congeals;
How this man felt
When he began to melt;
Whether he wore his human form and face
With any extraordinary grace;
If many mortals fell
As victims to the spell;
Or if,
As he stood, stark and stiff,
With a bare broomstick in his arms,
And not a trace of transcendental charms,
That man of snow
Grew wise enough to know
That the Brook's hopes were but a Poet's dream,
And well content to be again a stream,
On the first sunny day,
Flowed quietly away;
Or what the end was—You must ask the Poet,
I don't know it.



Page 31

[Illustration]

A SOLDIER'S CHILDREN.

Our home used to be in a hut in the dear old Camp, with lots of bands and trumpets and bugles and Dead Marches, and three times a day there was a gun,

But now we live in View Villa at the top of the village, and it isn't nearly such fun.

We never see any soldiers, except one day we saw a Volunteer, and we ran after him as hard as ever we could go, for we thought he looked rather brave;

But there's only been one funeral since we came, an ugly black thing with no Dead March or Union Jack, and not even a firing party at the grave.

There is a man in uniform to bring the letters, but he's nothing like our old Orderly, Brown;

I told him, through the hedge, "Your facings are dirty, and you'd have to wear your belt if my father was at home," and oh, how he did frown!

But things can't be expected to go right when Old Father's away, and he's gone to the war;

Which is why we play at soldiers and fighting battles more than ever we did before.

And I try to keep things together: every morning I have a parade of myself and Dick,

To see that we are clean, and to drill him and do sword-exercise with poor Grandpapa's stick.

Grandpapa's dead, so he doesn't want it now, and Dick's too young for a real tin sword like mine:

He's so young he won't make up his mind whether he'll go into the Artillery or the Line.

I want him to be a gunner, for his frock's dark blue, and Captain Powder gave us a wooden gun with an elastic that shoots quite a big ball.

It's nonsense Dick's saying he'd like to be a Chaplain, for that's not being a soldier at all.

Besides, he always wants to be Drum-Major when we've funerals, to stamp the stick and sing RUM—TUM—TUM—

To the Dead March in *Saul* (that's the name of the tune, and you play it on a drum).

[Illustration]



Mary is so good, she might easily be a Chaplain, but of course she
can't be anything that wants man;
She likes nursing her doll, but when we have battles she moves the
lead soldiers about, and does what she can.
She never grumbles about not being able to grow up into a General,
though I should think it must be a great bore.
I asked her what she would do if she were grown up into a woman,
and belonged to some one who was wounded in the war,—
She said she'd go out and nurse him: so I said, "But supposing you
couldn't get him better, and he died; how would you behave?"
And she said if she couldn't get a ship to bring him home in, she
should stay out there and grow a garden, and make wreaths
for his grave.
Nurse says we oughtn't to have battles, now Father's gone to battle,
but that's just the reason why!
And I don't believe one bit what she said about its making Mother cry.
Only she does like us to put away our toys on



Page 32

Sunday, so we can't
have the soldiers or the gun;
But yesterday Dick said, "I was thinking in church, and I've thought
of a game about soldiers, and it's a perfectly Sunday one;
It's a Church Parade: you'll have to be a lot of officers and men,
Mary'll do for a few wives and families, and I'll be Chaplain
to the Forces and pray for everyone at the war."
So he put his nightgown over his knickerbocker suit, and knelt on the
Ashantee stool, and Mary and I knelt on the floor.
I think it was rather nice of Dick, for he said what put it into
his head
Was thinking they mightn't have much time for their prayers on active
service, and we ought to say them instead.
I should have liked to parade the lead soldiers, but I didn't, for
Mother says, "What's the good of being a soldier's son if
you can't do as you're bid?"
But we thought there'd be no harm in letting the box be there if we
kept on the lid.
Dick couldn't pray out of the Prayer-book, because he's backward with
being delicate, and he can't read;
So he had to make a prayer out of his own head, and I think he did it
very well indeed.
He began, "GOD save the Queen, and the Army and the Navy, and the
Irregular Forces and the Volunteers!
Especially Old Father (he went out with the first draft, and he's a
Captain in the Royal Engineers)".
But I said, "I don't think 'GOD save the Queen' is a proper prayer,
I think it's only a sort of three cheers."
So he said, "GOD bless the Generals, and the Colonels, and the Majors,
and the Captains, and the Lieutenants, and the
Sub-lieutenants, and the Quartermasters, and the
non-commissioned officers, and the men;
And the bands, and the colours, and the guns, and the horses and the
wagons, and the gun-carriage they use for the funerals; and
please I should like them all to come home safe again.
(Don't, Mary! I haven't finished; it isn't time for you to say Amen.)
I haven't prayed for the Chaplains, or the Doctors who help the poor
men left groaning on the ground when the victories are won;
And I want to pray particularly for the very poor ones who die of fever
and miss all the fighting and fun.
GOD bless the good soldiers, like Old Father, and Captain Powder,
and the men with good-conduct medals; and please let the



naughty ones all be forgiven;
And if the black men kill our men, send down white angels to take
their poor dear souls to Heaven!
*Now you may both say Amen, and I shall give out hymn four hundred
and thirty-seven.*
There are eight verses and eight Alleluias, and we can't sing very
well, but we did our best,
Only Mary would cry in the verse about "Soon, soon to faithful
warriors comes their rest!"
But we're both very glad Dick has found out a Sunday game about
fighting, for we never had one before;
And now we can play at soldiers every day till Old Father comes
home from the war.



Page 33

[Illustration]

“TOUCH HIM IF YOU DARE.”

A TALE OF THE HEDGE.

HEDGE-PLANTS.

“Beware!

We advise you to take care.

He lodges with us, so we know him well,

And can tell

You all about him,

And we strongly advise you not to flout him.”

DANDELION.

“At my time of life,” said the Dandelion,

“I keep an eye on

The slightest sign of disturbance and riot,

For my one object is to keep quiet

The reason I take such very great care,”

The old Dandy went on, “is because of my hair.

It was very thick once, and as yellow as gold;

But now I am old,

It is snowy-white,

And comes off with the slightest fright.

As to using a brush—

My good dog! I beseech you, don’t rush,

Go quietly by me, if you please

You’re as bad as a breeze.

I hope you’ll attend to what we’ve said;

And—whatever you do—don’t touch my head,

In this equinoctial, blustering weather

You might knock it off with a feather.”

THISTLE.

Said the Thistle, “I can tickle,

But not as a Hedgehog can prickle;

Even my tough old friend the Moke

Would find our lodger no joke.”

DOG-ROSE.



“I have thorns,” sighed the Rose,
“But they don’t protect me like those;
He can pull his thorns right over his nose.”

NETTLE.

“My sting,” said the Nettle,
“Is nothing to his when he’s put on his mettle.
No nose can endure it,
No dock-leaves will cure it.”

DOG.

“Bow-wow!” said the Dog:
“All this fuss about a Hedgehog?
Though I never saw one before—
 There’s my paw!
Good-morning, Sir! Do you never stir?
 You look like an overgrown burr.
Good-day, I-say:
Will you have a game of play?
With your humped-up back and your spines on end,
You remind me so of an intimate friend,
 The Persian Puss
 Who lives with us.
 How well I know her tricks!
 The dear creature!
Just when you’re sure you can reach her,
In the twinkling of a couple of sticks
She saves herself by her heels,
And looks down at you out of the apple-tree, with eyes like catherine
 wheels.
 The odd part of it is,
I could swear that I could not possibly miss
Her silky, cumbersome, traily tail,
And that’s just where I always fail.
But you seem to have nothing, Sir, of the sort;
And I should be mortified if you thought
 That I’m stupid at sport;
I assure you I don’t often meet my match,
Where I chase I commonly catch.
 I’ve caught cats,
 And rats,
And (between ourselves) I once caught a sheep,
And I think I could catch a weasel asleep.”



Page 34

HEDGE-PLANTS.

From the whole of the hedge there rose a shout,
"Oh! you'll catch it, no doubt!
But remember we gave you warning fair,

Touch him if you dare!"

DOG.

"If I dare?" said the Dog—"Take that!"
As he gave the Hedgehog a pat.
But oh, how he pitied his own poor paw;
And shook it and licked it, it was so sore.

DANDELION.

"It's much too funny by half,"
Said the Dandelion; "it makes me ill,
For I cannot keep still,
And my hair comes out if I laugh."

The Hedgehog he spoke never a word,
And he never stirred;
His peeping eyes, his inquisitive nose,
And his tender toes,
Were all wrapped up in his prickly clothes.
A provoking enemy you may suppose!
And a dangerous one to flout—
Like a well-stocked pin-cushion inside out.

The Dog was valiant, the Dog was vain,
He flew at the prickly ball again,
Snapping with all his might and main,
But, oh! the pain!
He sat down on his stumpy tail and howled,
Then he laid his jaws on his paws and growled.

DANDELION.

With laughter the Dandelion shook—
"It passes a printed book;
It's as good as a play, I declare,
But it's cost me half my back hair!"



The Dog he made another essay,
It really and truly was very plucky—
But “third times,” you know, are not always lucky—
And this time he ran away!

HEDGE-PLANTS.

Then the Hedge-plants every one
Rustled together, “What fun! what fun!
 The battle is done,
 The victory won.
Dear Hedge-pig, pray come out of the Sun.”

The Hedge-pig put forth his snout,
He sniffed hither and thither and peeped about;
Then he tucked up his prickly clothes,
And trotted away on his tender toes
To where the hedge-bottom is cool and deep,
Had a slug for supper, and went to sleep.
His leafy bed-clothes cuddled his chin,
And all the Hedge-plants tucked him in.

But the hairs and the tears that we shed
 Never can be recalled;
And when *he* too went off, in hysterics, to bed,
 DANDELION was bald.

MOTHER’S BIRTHDAY REVIEW.

BROTHER BILL.

To have a good birthday for a grown-up person is very difficult indeed;
We don’t give it up, for Mother says the harder things are, the harder
you must try till you succeed.
Still, *our* birthdays are different; we want so many things, and
choosing your own pudding, and even half-holidays are treats;
But what can you do for people who always order the dinner, and never
have lessons, and don’t even like sweets?



Page 35

I know Mother does not. Baby put a big red comfit in her mouth, and I saw her take it out again on the sly;

I don't believe she even enjoys going a-gypseying, for she gets neuralgia if she stands about where it isn't dry.

And how can you boil the kettle if you're not near the brook? But it's the last time she shall go there,

I told her so; I said, "What's the good of having five sons, except to mount guard over you, you Queen of all Mothers that ever were?"

But she's not easy to manage, and she shams sometimes, and shamming is a thing I can't bear.

She shammed about the red comfit, when she didn't think Baby could see her;

And (because they're the only things we can think of for birthday presents for her) she shams wearing out a needle-book and a pin-cushion every year.

The only things we can think of for Father are paper-cutters; but there's no sham about *his* wearing *them* out;

He would always lose them, long before his next birthday, if Mother did not keep finding them lying about.

Last year's paper-cutter was as big as a sword (not as big as Father's sword, but as big as a wooden one, like ours),

And he left it behind in a railway-carriage, when he'd had it just thirty-six hours;

So we knew he was ready for another. It was Mother's birthday that bothered us so;

[Illustration: Review of the Household Troops
The Cavalry]

And if it hadn't been for Dolly's Major (he's her Godfather, and she calls him "my Major"), what we should have done I really don't know!

He said, "What's the matter?" And Dolly said, "Mother's birthday's the matter." And I said, "We can't think what to devise

To give her a birthday treat that won't give her neuralgia, and will take her by surprise.

Look here, Major! How can you give people treats who can order what they wish for far better than you?



I wonder what they do for the Queen!—her birthday must be the hardest of all.” But he said, “Not a bit of it! They have a review: Cocked hats and all the rest of it; and a salute, and a *feu de joie*, and a March-Past.

That’s the way we keep the Queen’s Birthday; and every year the same as the last.”

So I settled at once to have a Mother’s Birthday Review; and that she should be Queen, and I should be the General in command.

I thought she couldn’t come to any harm by sitting in a fur cloak and a birthday wreath at the window, and bowing and waving her hand.

We did not tell her what was coming, we only asked for leave to have all the seven donkeys for an hour and a half;

(We always hire them from the same old man)—two for the girls, and five for me and my brothers—I told him, “for me and my Staff.”

We could have managed with five, if the girls would only have been Maids of Honour, and stayed indoors with the Queen.



Page 36

Maggie would if I'd asked her; but Dolly will go her own way, and that's into the thick of everything, to see whatever there is to be seen.

She's only four years old, but she's ridiculously like the picture of an ancient ancestress of ours

Who defended an old castle in Cornwall, against the French, for hours and hours.

Her husband was away, so she was in command, and all her household obeyed her;

She made them strip the lead off the roofs, and they did, and she boiled it down and gave it very hot indeed to the

French invader.[5]

Maggie would have let the French in; she doesn't like me to say so, but I know she would,—you can get anything out of Maggie by talking.

[Illustration: The Spectators.]

She likes to hire a donkey, and then sham she'd rather not ride, for fear of being too heavy; and to take Spike out for a run, and then carry him to save him the trouble of walking.

But she's very good; she made all our cocked hats, and at the review she and Dolly and Spike were the loyal crowd.

Dick and Tom and Harry were the troops, and I was the General, and Mother looked quite like a Queen at the window, and bowed.

The donkeys made very good chargers on the whole, and especially mine; Jem's was the only one that gave trouble, and neither fair means nor foul would keep him in line.

Just when I'd dressed all their noses to a nice level (you can do nothing with their ears), then back went Jem's brute,

And Jem caught him a whack with the flat of his sword (a thing you never see done on the Staff), and it rather spoilt the salute;

But the spirit of the troops was excellent, and we'd a *feu de joie* with penny pistols (Jem's donkey was the only one that shied),

and Dolly's Major says that, all things considered, he never saw a better March-Past;

And Mother was delighted with her first Birthday Review, and she is none the worse for it, and says she only hopes that it won't be the last.



[Footnote 5: Dame Elizabeth Treffry (*temp.* Henry VI.) defended Place House, Fowey, Cornwall, in the circumstances and with the vigorous measures described. On his return her husband wisely “Embattled all the walls of the house, and in a manner made it a Castelle, and unto this day it is the glorie of the town building in Faweeye.”—*Carew*. The beauties of Place Castle remain to this day also.]

DOLLY.

They call me Dolly, but I'm not a doll, and I'm not a baby, though
Baby is sometimes my name;
I behave beautifully at meals, and at church, and I can put on my
own boots, and can say a good deal of the Catechism, and ride
a donkey, and play at any boys' game.
I've ridden a donkey that kicks (at least I rode him as long as I was
on), and a donkey that rolls, and an old donkey that
goes lame.
I mean to ride like a lady now, but that's



Page 37

because I ought, not because
I easily can;
For what with your legs and your pommels (I mean the saddle's pommels),
it would be much easier always to ride like a man.
Boys *look* braver, but I think it's really more dangerous to ride
sideways, because of the saddle slipping round.
(I didn't cry; I played at slipping round the world, and getting to
New Zealand with my head upside down on the ground.)
The reason the saddle is slippery is not because it's smooth,
for it's rather rough; and there's a hard ridge behind,
And the horse's hair coming through the donkey's back (I mean through
his saddle) scratches you
dreadfully; but I tuck my things under me, and pretend I don't mind.
They work out again though, particularly when they are starched, and
I think frocks get shorter every time they go to the wash;
But I don't complain; if it's very uncomfortable, I make an ugly face
to myself, and say, "Bosh!"
We've all of us had a good deal of practice, so we ought to know
how to ride;
We've ridden a great deal since we came to live on the Heath, and we
rode a good deal when Father was stationed at the sea-side.
My Major taught me to ride sideways, and at first he would hold me on;
But I don't like being touched; and I don't call it riding like a lady
if you're held on by an officer, and I'd rather tumble off if
I can't stick on by myself; so I sent him away, and the nasty
saddle slipped round directly he was gone.
I only crushed my sun-bonnet, and the donkey stood quite still. (We
always call that one "the old stager.")
I wasn't frightened, except just the tiniest bit; but he says he was
dreadfully frightened. So I said, "Then you ought to be
ashamed of yourself, considering all your medals, and that
you're a Major."
He likes me very much, and I like him, and when my fifth birthday
comes, he says I'm to choose a donkey, and he'll buy it for
me, but the saddle and bridle shall be quite new;
So I've made up my mind to choose the one Brother Bill had for his
charger at Mother's Birthday Review;
And Maggie is so glad, she says her life is quite miserable with
thinking how miserable other lives are, if only we knew.
Maggie loves every creature that lives; she won't confess to black
beetles, but she can't stamp on them (I've stamped out lots
in my winter boots), and she doesn't even think a donkey



ugly when he brays;
And she says she shall buy a brush, out of her pocket-money, and brush
my donkey every day till he looks like a horse, and that it
shan't be her fault if there isn't one poor old brute beast
who lives happily to the end of his days.

JACK ASS.



Page 38

The dew falls over the Heath, Brother Donkeys, and the darkness falls,
but still through the gathering night

All around us spreads the Heath Bed-straw[6] in glimmering sheets of
white.

Dragged and trampled, and plucked and wasted, it patiently spreads
and survives;

Kicked and thwacked, and prodded and over-laden, we patiently cling
to our lives.

Hee-haw! for the rest and silence of darkness that follow the labours
of light.

Hee-haw! for the hours from night to morning, that balance the hours
from morning to night.

Hee-haw! for the sweet night air that gives human beings cold in
the head.

Hee-haw! for the civilization that sends human beings to bed.

Rest, Brother Donkeys, rest, from the bit, the burden, the blow,
The dust, the flies, the restless children, the brutal roughs, the
greedy donkey-master, the greedier donkey-hirer, the
holiday-maker who knows no better, and the holiday-makers
who ought to know!

When the odorous furze-bush prickles the seeking nose, and the short
damp grass refreshes the tongue,—lend, Brother Donkeys, lend
a long and attentive ear!

Whilst I proudly bray

Of the one bright day

In our hard and chequered career.

I've dragged pots, and vegetables, and invalids, and
fish, and I've galloped with four costermongers to the races;
I've carried babies, and sea-coal, and sea-sand, and sea-weed in
panniers, and been sold to the gypsies, and been bought back
for the sea-side, and ridden (in a white saddle-cloth with
scarlet braid) by the fashionable visitors. (There was always
a certain distinction in my paces,

Though I say it who shouldn't) I've spent a summer on the Heath, and
next winter near Covent Garden, and moved the following year
to the foot of a mountain, to take people up to the top to
show them the view.

But how little we know what's before us! And how little I guessed I
should ever be chief charger at a Queen's Birthday Review!

Did I triumph alone? No, Brother Donkeys, no! You also took your place
with the defenders of the nation;

Subordinate positions to my own, but meritoriously filled, though a
little more style would have well become so great an occasion.



That malevolent old Moke—may his next thistle choke him!—disgraced us
all with his jibbing—the ill-tempered old ass!

Young Neddy is shaggy and shy, but not amiss, if he'd held his ears up,
and not kept his eyes on the grass.

Nothing is more je-june (I may say vulgar) than to seem anxious to eat
when the crisis calls for public spirit, enthusiasm, and an
elevated tone;

And I wish, Brother Donkeys, I wish that all had felt as I felt, the
responsibility of a March-Past the Throne!

Respect and self-respect delicately blended; one ear up, and the other
lowered to salute, as I passed the window from which we
were seen

(Unless I grievously misunderstood the young General



Page 39

this morning,) by
no less a personage than her Most Gracious Majesty THE QUEEN.
Sleep, Brother Donkeys, sleep! But I fancy you're sleeping already,
for you make no reply;
Not a quiver of your ears, not a sign from your motionless drooping
noses, dark against the dusky night sky.
As black and immovable as the silent fir-trees you solemnly
slumber beneath,
Whilst I wakefully meditate on a glorious past, and painfully ponder
the future, as the dewes fall over the Heath.

[Footnote 6: Heath bed-straw (*Galium Saxatile*). This white-flowered
bed-straw grows profusely on Hampstead Heath.]

THE PROMISE.

CHILD.

Five blue eggs hatching,
With bright eyes watching,
Little brown mother, you sit on your nest.

BIRD.

Oh! pass me blindly,
Oh! spare me kindly,
Pity my terror, and leave me to rest.

CHORUS OF CHILDREN.

Hush! hush! hush!
'Tis a poor mother thrush.
When the blue eggs hatch, the brown birds will sing—
This is a promise made in the Spring.

CHILD.

Five speckled thrushes
In leafy bushes
Singing sweet songs to the hot Summer sky.
In and out twitting,
Here and there flitting,
Happy is life as the long days go by.



CHORUS.

Hush! hush! hush!
'Tis the song of the thrush:
Hatched are the blue eggs; the brown birds do sing—
Keeping the promise made in the Spring.

Published in *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, July 1866, with music by
Alexander Ewing.

CONVALESCENCE.

Hold my hand, little Sister, and nurse my head, whilst I try to
remember the word,
What was it?—that the doctor says is now fairly established both
in me and my bird.
C-O-N-con, *with a con*, S-T-A-N-stan, *with a stan*—No! That's
Constantinople, that is
The capital of the country where rhubarb-and-magnesia comes from, and
I wish they would keep it in that country, and not send
it to this.
C-O-N-con—how my head swims! Now I've got it!
C-O-N-V-A-L-E-S-C-E-N-C-E.
Convalescence! And that's what the doctor says is now fairly
established both in my blackbird and me.
He says it means that you are better, and that you'll be well
by and by.
And so the Sea-captain says, and he says we ought to be friends,
because we're both convalescents—at least we're all three
convalescents, my blackbird, and the Captain and I.
He's a sea-captain, not a land-captain, but, all the same, he was
in the war,
And he fought,—for I asked him,—and he's been ill ever since, and
that's why he's not afloat, but ashore;
And why somebody else has got his ship; and she behaved so beautifully
in the battle, and he loves her quite as much as his wife,
and rather better than the rest of his



Page 40

relations, for I asked him; and now he's afraid she will never belong to him any more.

I like him. I've seen him three times out walking with two sticks, when I was driving in the bath-chair, but I never talked to him till to-day.

He'd only one stick and a telescope, and he let me look through it at the big ship that was coming round the corner into the bay.

He was very kind, and let me ask questions. I said, "Are you a sea-captain?" and he said, "Yes." And I said, "How funny it is about land things and sea things!

There are captains and sea-captains, and weeds and sea-weeds, and serpents and sea-serpents. Did you ever meet one, and is it really like the dragons on our very old best blue tea-things?"

But he never did. So I asked him, "Have you got convalescence? Does your doctor say it is fairly established? Do your eyes ache if you try to read, and your neck if you draw, and your back if you sit up, and your head if you talk?

Don't you get tired of doing nothing, and worse tired still if you do anything; and does everything wobble about when you walk?

Wouldn't you rather go back to bed? I think I would. Don't you wish you were well? Wouldn't you rather be ill than only better?

I do hate convalescence, don't you?"

Then I stopped asking, and he shut up his telescope, and sat down on the shingle, and said, "When you come to my age, little chap, you won't think 'What is it I'd rather have?' but, 'What is it I've got to do?'

'What have I got to do or to bear; and how can I do it or bear it best?'

That's the only safe point to make for, my lad. Make for it, and leave the rest!"

I said, "But *wouldn't* you rather be in battles than in bed, with your head aching as if it would split?"

And he said, "Of course I would; so would most men. But, my little convalescent, that's not it.

What would *you* think of a man who was ordered into battle, and went grumbling and wishing he were in bed?"

"What should I think of the fellow? Why, I should know he was a coward," I said.

"And if he were confined to bed," said the Sea-captain, "and lay grumbling and wishing he were in battle, I should give him no better a name;



For the courage that dares, and the courage that bears, are really one and the same.”

Hold my hand, little Sister, and nurse my head, for I'm thinking, and I very much fear

You've had no good of being well since I was ill; I've led you such a life; but indeed I am obliged to you, dear!

Is it true that Nurse has got something the matter with her legs, and that Mary has gone home because she's worn out with nursing, And won't be fit to work for months? (will *she* be convalescent, because it was such hard work waiting on *me*?) and did Cook say, “So much grumbling and complaining is nigh as big a sin as swearing and cursing”?



Page 41

I wish I hadn't been so cross with poor Mary, and I wish I hadn't given so much trouble about my medicine and my food.

I didn't think about her. I only thought what a bother it was. I wish I hadn't thought so much about being miserable, that I never thought of trying to be good.

I believe the Sea-captain is right, and I shall tell him so to-morrow, when he comes here to tea;

He's going to look at my blackbird's leg, and if it is really set, he wants me to let it go free.

He says captivity is worse than convalescence, and so I should think it must be.

Are you tired, little Sister? You feel shaky. Don't beg my pardon; I beg yours. I've not let you go out of my sight for weeks.

Get your things on, and have a gallop on Jack.

Ride round this way and let me see you. I won't say a word about wishing I was going too; and if my head gets bad whilst you're away, I will bear it my very best till you come back.

Tell me one thing before you start. If I learn to be patient, shall I learn to be brave, do you think? The Sea-captain says so.

He says, "Self-command is the making of a man," and he's a finely-made man himself, so he ought to know.

Perhaps, if I try hard at Convalescence now, I may become a brave sea-captain hereafter, and take my beautiful ship into battle, and bring her out again with flying colours and fame, If the courage that dares, and the courage that bears, *are* really one and the same.

[Illustration]

THE ADVENTURES OF AN ELF.

A PICTURE POEM FOR THE LITTLE ONES.

By Fedor Flinzer. Freely translated by J.H. Ewing.

I.

Dear children, listen whilst I tell
What to a certain Elf befell,
Who left his house and sallied forth



Adventure seeking, south and north,
And west and east, by path and field,
Resolved to conquer or to yield.
A thimble on his back he carried,
With a rose-twig his foes he parried.

[Illustration]

II.

It was a sunny, bright, spring day,
When to the wood he took his way;
He knew that in a certain spot
A Bumble Bee his nest had got.
The Bee was out, the chance was good,
But just when grabbing all he could,
He heard the Bee behind him humming,
And only wished he'd heard him coming!

[Illustration]

III.

In terror turned the tiny man,
And now a famous fight began:
The Bee flew round, and buzzed and stung,
The Elf his prickly rose-staff swung.
Now fiercely here, now wildly there,
He hit the Bee or fought the air.
At last one weighty blow descended:
The Bee was dead—the fight was ended.

[Illustration]

IV.



Page 42

Exhausted quite, he took a seat.
The honey tasted doubly sweet!
The thimble-full had been upset,
But still there were a few drops yet.
He licked his lips and blessed himself,
That he was such a lucky Elf,
And now might hope to live in clover;
But, ah! his troubles were not over!

[Illustration]

V.

For at that instant, by his side,
A beast of fearful form he spied:
At first he thought it was a bear,
And headlong fell in dire despair.
He lost one slipper in the moss,
And this was not his only loss.
With paws and snout the beast was nimble,
And very soon cleared out the thimble.

[Illustration]

VI.

This rifling of his honey-pot
Awoke our Elfin's wrath full hot.
He made a rope of linden bast,
By either end he held it fast,
And creeping up behind the beast,
Intent upon the honey feast,
Before it had the slightest inkling,
The rope was round it in a twinkling.

[Illustration]

VII.

The mouse shrieked "Murder!" "Fire!" and "Thieves!"
And struggled through the twigs and leaves.
It pulled the reins with all its might,
Our hero only drew them tight.
Upon the mouse's back he leapt,



And like a man his seat he kept.
His steed was terribly affrighted,
But he himself was much delighted.

[Illustration]

VIII.

“Gee up, my little horse!” he cried,
“I mean to have a glorious ride;
So bear me forth with lightning speed,
A Knight resolved on doughty deed.
The wide world we will gallop round,
And clear the hedges at one bound.”
The mouse set off, the hero bantered,
And out into the world they cantered.

[Illustration]

IX.

At last they rode up to an inn:
“Good Mr. Host, pray who’s within?”
“My daughter serves the customers,
Before the fire the Tom-cat purrs.”
For further news they did not wait—
The mouse sprang through the garden-gate—
They fled without a look behind them.
The question is—Did Thomas find them?

SONGS FOR MUSIC

SERENADE.

I would not have you wake for me,
Fair lady, though I love you!
And though the night is warm, and all
The stars are out above you;
And though the dew’s so light it could
Not hurt your little feet,
And nightingales in yonder wood
Are singing passing sweet.



Page 43

Yet may my plaintive strain unite
And mingle with your dreaming,
And through the visions of the night
Just interweave my seeming.
Yet no! sleep on with fancy free
In that untroubled breast;
No song of mine, no thought of me,
Deserves to break your rest!

MAIDEN WITH THE GIPSY LOOK.

Maiden with the gipsy look,
Dusky locks and russet hue,
Open wide thy Sybil's book,
Tell my fate and tell it true;
Shall I live? or shall I die?
Timely wed, or single be?
Maiden with the gipsy eye,
Read my riddle unto me!

Maiden with the gipsy face,
If thou canst not tell me all,
Tell me thus much, of thy grace,
Should I climb, or fear to fall?
Should I dare, or dread to dare?
Should I speak, or silent be?
Maiden with the gipsy hair,
Read my riddle unto me!

Maiden with the gipsy hair,
Deep into thy mirror look,
See my love and fortune there,
Clearer than in Sybil's book:
Let me cross thy slender palm,
Let me learn my fate from thee;
Maiden with the gipsy charm,
Read my riddle unto me.

AH! WOULD I COULD FORGET.

The whispering water rocks the reeds,
And, murmuring softly, laps the weeds;
And nurses there the falsest bloom



That ever wrought a lover's doom.
Forget me not! Forget me not!
Ah! would I could forget!
But, crying still, "Forget me not,"
Her image haunts me yet.

We wander'd by the river's brim,
The day grew dusk, the pathway dim;
Her eyes like stars dispell'd the gloom,
Her gleaming fingers pluck'd the bloom.
Forget me not! Forget me not!
Ah! would I could forget!
But, crying still, "Forget me not,"
Her image haunts me yet.

The pale moon lit her paler face,
And coldly watch'd our last embrace,
And chill'd her tresses' sunny hue,
And stole that flower's turquoise blue.
Forget me not! Forget me not!
Ah! would I could forget!
But, crying still, "Forget me not,"
Her image haunts me yet.

The fateful flower droop'd to death,
The fair, false maid forswore her faith;
But I obey a broken vow,
And keep those wither'd blossoms now!
Forget me not! Forget me not!
Ah! would I could forget!
But, crying still, "Forget me not,"
Her image haunts me yet.

Sweet lips that pray'd—"Forget me not!"
Sweet eyes that will not be forgot!
Recall your prayer, forego your power,
Which binds me by the fatal flower.
Forget me not! Forget me not!
Ah! would I could forget!
But, crying still, "Forget me not,"
Her image haunts me yet.



Page 44

MADRIGAL.

Life is full of trouble,
Love is full of care,
Joy is like a bubble
Shining in the air,
For you cannot
Grasp it anywhere.

Love is not worth getting,
It doth fade so fast.
Life is not worth fretting
Which so soon is past;
And you cannot
Bid them longer last.

Yet for certain fellows
Life seems true and strong;
And with some, they tell us,
Love will linger long;
Thus they cannot
Understand my song.

THE ELLEREE.[7]

A SONG OF SECOND SIGHT.

Elleree! O Elleree!
Seeing what none else may see,
Dost thou see the man in grey?
Dost thou hear the night hounds bay?
Elleree! O Elleree!
Seventh son of seventh son,
All thy thread of life is spun,
Thy little race is nearly run,
And death awaits for thee!

Elleree! O Elleree!
Coronach shall wail for thee;
Get thee shrived and get thee blest,
Get thee ready for thy rest,
Elleree! O Elleree!
That thou owest quickly give,
What thou ownest thou must leave,



And those thou lovest best shall grieve,
But all in vain for thee!

“Bodach Glas!”[8] the chieftain said,
“All my debts but one are paid,
All I love have long been dead,
All my hopes on Heaven are stay’d,
Death to me can bring no dole;”
Thus the Elleree replied;—
But with ebbing of the tide
As sinks the setting sun he died;—
May Christ receive his soul!

[Footnote 7: “Elleree” is the name of one who has the gift of second sight.]

[Footnote 8: “Bodach Glas,” the Man in Grey, appears to a Highland family with the gift of second sight, presaging death.]

OTHER STARS.

The night is dark, and yet it is not quite:
Those stars are hid that other orbs may shine;
Twin stars, whose rays illuminate the night,
And cheer her gloom, but only deepen mine;
For these fair stars are not what they do seem,
But vanish’d eyes remember’d in a dream.

The night is dark, and yet it brings no rest;
Those eager eyes gaze on and banish sleep;
Though flaming Mars has lower’d his crimson crest,
And weary Venus pales into the deep,
These two with tender shining mock my woe
From out the distant heaven of long ago.

The night is dark, and yet how bright they gleam!
Oh! empty vision of a vanish’d light!
Sweet eyes! must you for ever be a dream
Deep in my heart, and distant from my sight?
For could you shine as once you shone before,
The stars might hide their rays for evermore!



Page 45

FADED FLOWERS.

My love she sent a flower to me
Of tender hue and fragrance rare,
And with it came across the sea
A letter kind as she was fair;
But when her letter met mine eyes,
The flower, the little flower, was dead:
And ere I touched the tender prize
The hues were dim, the fragrance fled.

I sent my love a letter too,
In happy hope no more to roam;
I bade her bless the vessel true
Whose gallant sails should waft me home.
But ere my letter reach'd her hand,
My love, my little love, was dead,
And when the vessel touch'd the land,
Fair hope for evermore had fled.

SPEED WELL.

What time I left my native land,
And bade farewell to my true love,
She laid a flower in my hand
As azure as the sky above.
"Speed thee well! Speed well!"
She softly whispered, "Speed well!
This flower blue
Be token true
Of my true heart's true love for you!"

Its tender hue is bright and pure,
As heav'n through summer clouds doth show,
A pledge though clouds thy way obscure,
It shall not be for ever so.
"Speed thee well! Speed well!"
She softly whisper'd, "Speed well!
This flower blue
Be token true
Of my true heart's true love for you!"



And as I toil through help and harm,
And whilst on alien shores I dwell,
I wear this flower as a charm,
My heart repeats that tender spell:
"Speed thee well! Speed well!"
It softly whispers, "Speed well!
This flower blue
Be token true
Of my true heart's true love for you!"

HOW MANY YEARS AGO?

How many years ago, love,
Since you came courting me?
Through oak-tree wood and o'er the lea,
With rosy cheeks and waistcoat gay,
And mostly not a word to say,—
How many years ago, love,
How many years ago?

How many years ago, love,
Since you to Father spoke?
Between your lips a sprig of oak:
You were not one with much to say,
But Mother spoke for you that day,—
How many years ago, love,
How many years ago?

So many years ago, love,
That soon our time must come
To leave our girl without a home;—
She's like her mother, love, you've said:
—At her age I had long been wed,—
How many years ago, love,
How many years ago?

For love of long-ago, love,
If John has aught to say,
When he comes up to us to-day,
(A likely lad, though short of tongue,)
Remember, husband, we were young,—
How many years ago, love,
How many years ago?



Page 46

“WITH A DIFFERENCE.”

I'm weary waiting here,
The chill east wind is sighing,
The autumn tints are sere,
The summer flowers are dying.
The river's sullen way
Winds on through vacant meadows,
The dying light of day
Strives vainly with the shadows.

A footstep stirs the leaves!
The faded fields seem brighter,
The sunset gilds the sheaves,
The low'ring clouds look lighter.
The river sparkles by,
Not all the flowers are falling,
There's azure in the sky,
And thou, my love, art calling.

THE LILY OF THE LAKE.

Over wastes of blasted heather,
Where the pine-trees stand together,
Evermore my footsteps wander,
Evermore the shadows yonder
 Deepen into gloom.
Where there lies a silent lake,
No song-bird there its thirst may slake,
No sunshine now to whiteness wake
 The water-lily's bloom.

Some sweet spring-time long departed,
I and she, the simple-hearted,
Bride and bridegroom, maid and lover,
Did that gloomy lake discover,
 Did those lilies see.
There we wandered side by side.
There it was they said she died.
But ah! in this I know they lied!
 She will return to me!



Never, never since that hour
Has the lake brought forth a flower.
Ever harshly do the sedges
Some sad secret from its edges
 Whisper to the shore.
Some sad secret I forget.
The lily though will blossom yet:
And when it blooms I shall have met
 My love for evermore.

FROM FLEETING PLEASURES.

A REQUIEM FOR ONE ALIVE.

From fleeting pleasures and abiding cares,
From sin's seductions and from Satan's snares,
From woes and wrath to penitence and prayers,
 Veni in pace!

Sweet absolution thy sad spirit heal;
To godly cares that end in endless weal,
To joys man cannot think or speak or feel,
 Vade in pace!

From this world's ways and being led by them,
From floods of evil thy youth could not stem,
From tents of Kedar to Jerusalem,
 Veni in pace!

Blest be thy worldly loss to thy soul's gain,
Blest be the blow that freed thee from thy chain,
Blest be the tears that wash thy spirit's stain,
 Vade in pace!

Oh, dead, and yet alive! Oh, lost and found!
Salvation's walls now compass thee around,
Thy weary feet are set on holy ground.
 Veni in pace!

Death gently garner thee with all the blest,
In heavenly habitations be thou guest;
To light perpetual and eternal rest,
 Vade in pace!



Page 47

THE RUNAWAY'S RETURN.

It was on such a night as this,
Some long unreal years ago,
When all within were wrapp'd in sleep,
And all without was wrapp'd in snow,
The full moon rising in the east,
The old church standing like a ghost,
That, shivering in the wintry mist,
And breathless with the silent frost,
A little lad, I ran to seek my fortune on the main;
I marvel now with how much hope and with how little pain!

It is of such a night as this,
In all the lands where I have been,
That memory too faithfully
Has painted the familiar scene.
By all the shores, on every sea,
In luck or loss, by night or day,
My highest hope has been to see
That home from which I ran away.
For this I toil'd, to this I look'd through many a weary year,
I marvel now with how much hope, and with how little fear.

On such a night at last I came,
But they were dead I loved of yore.
Ah, Mother, then my heart felt all
The pain it should have felt before!
I came away, though loth to come,
I clung, and yet why should I cling?
When all have gone who made it home,
It is the shadow, not the thing.
A homeless man, once more I seek my fortune on the main:
I marvel with how little hope, and with what bitter pain.

FANCY FREE.

A GIRL'S SONG.

With bark and bound and frolic round
My dog and I together run;
While by our side a brook doth glide,
And laugh and sparkle in the sun.
We ask no more of fortune's store



Than thus at our sweet wills to roam:
And drink heart's ease from every breeze
That blows about the hills of home.
As, fancy free,
With game and glee,
We happy three
Dance down the glen.

And yet they say that some fine day
This vagrant stream may serve a mill;
My doggy guard a master's yard;
My free heart choose another's will.
How this may fare we little care,
My dog and I, as still we run!
Whilst by our side the brook doth glide,
And laugh and sparkle in the sun.
For, fancy free,
With game and glee,
We happy three
Dance down the glen.

MY LOVE'S GIFT.

You ask me what—since we must part—
You shall bring home to me;
Bring back a pure and faithful heart,
As true as mine to thee.
I ask not wealth nor fame,
I only ask for thee,
Thyself—and that dear self the same—
My love, bring back to me!

You talk of gems from foreign lands,
Of treasure, spoil, and prize.
Ah, love! I shall not search your hands,
But look into your eyes.
I ask not wealth nor fame,
I only ask for thee,
Thyself—and that dear self the same—
My love, bring back to me!



Page 48

You speak of glory and renown,
With me to share your pride,
Unbroken faith is all the crown
I ask for as your bride.
I ask not wealth nor fame,
I only ask for thee,
Thyself—and that dear self the same—
My love, bring back to me!

You bid me with hope's eager gaze
Behold fair fortune come.
I only dream I see your face
Beside the hearth at home.
I ask not wealth nor fame,
I do but ask for thee!
Thyself—and that dear self the same—
May God restore to me!

ANEMONES.

If I should wish hereafter that your heart
Should beat with one fair memory of me,
May Time's hard hand our footsteps guide apart,
But lead yours back one spring-time to the Lea.
Nodding Anemones,
Wind-flowers pale,
Bloom with the budding trees,
Dancing to every breeze,
Mock hopes more fair than these,
Love's vows more frail.

For then the grass we loved grows green again,
And April showers make April woods more fair;
But no sun dries the sad salt tears of pain,
Or brings back summer lights on faded hair,
Nodding Anemones,
Wind-flowers pale,
Bloom with the budding trees,
Dancing to every breeze,
Mock hopes more frail than these,
Love's vows more frail.



AUTUMN LEAVES.

The Spring's bright tints no more are seen,
And Summer's ample robe of green
Is russet-gold and brown;
When flowers fall to every breeze
And, shed reluctant from the trees,
The leaves drop down.

A sadness steals about the heart,
—And is it thus from youth we part,
And life's redundant prime?
Must friends like flowers fade away,
And life like Nature know decay,
And bow to time?

And yet such sadness meets rebuke,
From every copse in every nook
Where Autumn's colours glow;
How bright the sky! How full the sheaves!
What mellow glories gild the leaves
Before they go.

Then let us sing the jocund praise,
In this bright air, of these bright days,
When years our friendships crown;
The love that's loveliest when 'tis old—
When tender tints have turned to gold
And leaves drop down.

HYMNS.

CONFIRMATION.

Long, long ago, with vows too much forgotten,
The Cross of Christ was seal'd on every brow,
Ah! slow of heart, that shun the Christian conflict;
Rise up at last! The accepted time is now.
Soldiers of Jesus! Blest who endure;
Stand in the battle; the victory is sure.

Hark! hark! the Saviour's voice to each is calling—
"I bore the Cross of Death in pain for thee;
On thee the Cross of daily life is falling:
Children! take up the Cross and follow Me."
Soldiers of Jesus! &c.



Page 49

Strive as God's saints have striven in all ages;
Press those slow steps where firmer feet have trod:
For us their lives adorn the sacred pages,
For them a crown of glory is with God.
Soldiers of Jesus! &c.

Peace! peace! sweet voices bring an ancient story,
(Such songs angelic melodies employ,
"Hard is the strife, but unconceived the glory:
Short is the pain, eternal is the joy."
Soldiers of Jesus! &c.

On! Christian souls, all base temptations spurning,
Drown coward thoughts in Faith's triumphant hymn;
Since Jesus suffer'd, our salvation earning,
Shall we not toil that we may rest with Him?
Soldiers of Jesus! &c. Amen.

WHITSUNTIDE.

Come down! come down! O Holy Ghost!
As once of old Thou didst come down
In fiery tongues at Pentecost,
The Apostolic heads to crown.

Come down! though now no flame divine,
Nor heaven-sent Dove, our sight amaze;
Our Church still shows the outward sign,
Thou truly givest inward grace.

Come down! come down! on infancy,
The babes whom Jesus deign'd to love;
God give us grace by faith to see,
Above the Font, the mystic Dove.

Come down! come down! on kneeling bands
Of those who fain would strength receive;
And in the laying on of hands
Bless us beyond what we believe.

Come down! not only on the saint,
Oh! struggle with the hard of heart,



With wilful sin and inborn taint,
Till lust, and wrath, and pride depart.

Come down! come down! sweet Comforter!
It was the promise of the Lord.
Come down! although we grieve Thee sore,
Not for our merits—but His Word.

Come down! come down! not what we would,
But what we need, O bring with Thee.
Turn life's sore riddle to our good;
A little while and we shall see. Amen.

CHRISTMAS WISHES.

A CAROL.

Oh, happy Christmas, full of blessings, come!
Now bid our discords cease;
Here give the weary ease;
Let the long-parted meet again in peace;
Bring back the far-away;
Grant us a holiday;
And by the hopes of Christmas-tide we pray—
Let love restore the fallen to his Home;
Whilst up and down the snowy streets the Christmas minstrels sing;
And through the frost from countless towers the bells of
Christmas ring.

Ah, Christ! and yet a happier day shall come!
Then bid our discords cease;
There give the weary ease;
Let the long-parted meet again in peace;
Bring back the far-away;
Grant us a holiday;
And by the hopes of Christmas-tide we pray—
Let love restore the fallen to his Home;
Whilst up and down the golden streets the blessed angels sing,
And evermore the heavenly chimes in heavenly cadence ring.



Page 50

TEACH ME.

Translated from the Danish of Oehlenschlaeger.

Teach me, O wood, to fade away,
As autumn's yellow leaves decay
 A better spring impends,—
Then green and glorious shall my tree
Take deep root in eternity,—
 Whose summer never ends!

Teach me, O bird of passage, this,
To seek, in faith a better bliss
 On other unknown shores!
When all is winter here and ice,
There ever-smiling Paradise
 Unfolds its happy doors.

Teach me, thou summer butterfly,
To break the bonds which on me lie.
With fetters all too firm.
Ah, soon on golden purple wing
The liberated soul shall spring,
Which now creeps as a worm!

Teach me, O Lord, to yonder skies
To lift in hope these weary eyes
With earthly sorrows worn.
Good Friday was a bitter day,
But bright the sun's eternal ray
Which broke on Easter morn.

THE END.

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