

The Home Book of Verse, V1

Burton Stevenson

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The Home Book of Verse, V1

Burton Stevenson

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 - FORTY YEARS AGO
 - BEN BOLT
 - "BREAK, BREAK, BREAK"
-

PART I. POEMS OF YOUTH AND AGE

THE HUMAN SEASONS

Four Seasons fill the measure of the year;
There are four seasons in the mind of man:
He has his lusty Spring, when fancy clear
Takes in all beauty with an easy span:

He has his Summer, when luxuriously
Spring's honeyed cud of youthful thought he loves
To ruminatè, and by such dreaming high
Is nearest unto Heaven: quiet coves

His soul has in its Autumn, when his wings
He furleth close; contented so to look
On mists in idleness – to let fair things
Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook: –

He has his Winter too of pale misfeature,
Or else he would forego his mortal nature.

John Keats [1795–1821]

THE BABY

"ONLY A BABY SMALL "

Only a baby small,
Dropped from the skies,
Only a laughing face,
Two sunny eyes;
Only two cherry lips,
One chubby nose;
Only two little hands,
Ten little toes.

Only a golden head,
Curly and soft;
Only a tongue that wags
Loudly and oft;
Only a little brain,
Empty of thought;
Only a little heart,
Troubled with naught.

Only a tender flower
Sent us to rear;
Only a life to love
While we are here;
Only a baby small,
Never at rest;
Small, but how dear to us,
God knoweth best.

Matthias Barr [1831-?]

ONLY

Something to live for came to the place,
Something to die for maybe,
Something to give even sorrow a grace,
And yet it was only a baby!

Cooing, and laughter, and gurgles, and cries,
Dimples for tenderest kisses,
Chaos of hopes, and of raptures, and sighs,
Chaos of fears and of blisses.

Last year, like all years, the rose and the thorn;
This year a wilderness maybe;
But heaven stooped under the roof on the morn
That it brought them only a baby.

Harriet Prescott Spofford [1835–1921]

INFANT JOY

"I have no name;
I am but two days old."
What shall I call thee?
"I happy am,
Joy is my name."
Sweet joy befall thee!

Pretty joy!
Sweet joy, but two days old.
Sweet joy I call thee;
Thou dost smile,
I sing the while;
Sweet joy befall thee!

William Blake [1757–1827]

BABY

From "At the Back of the North Wind"

Where did you come from, baby dear?
Out of the everywhere into the here.

Where did you get those eyes so blue?
Out of the sky as I came through.

What makes the light in them sparkle and spin?
Some of the starry spikes left in.

Where did you get that little tear?
I found it waiting when I got here.

What makes your forehead so smooth and high?
A soft hand stroked it as I went by.

What makes your cheek like a warm white rose?
I saw something better than any one knows.

Whence that three-cornered smile of bliss?
Three angels gave me at once a kiss.

Where did you get this pearly ear?
God spoke, and it came out to hear.

Where did you get those arms and hands?
Love made itself into bonds and bands.

Feet, where did you come, you darling things?
From the same box as the cherubs' wings.

How did they all just come to be you?
God thought about me, and so I grew.

But how did you come to us, you dear?
God thought about you, and so I am here.

George Macdonald [1824–1905]

TO A NEW-BORN BABY GIRL

And did thy sapphire shallop slip
Its moorings suddenly, to dip

A down the clear, ethereal sea
From star to star, all silently?
What tenderness of archangels
In silver, thrilling syllables
Pursued thee, or what dulcet hymn
Low-chanted by the cherubim?
And thou departing must have heard
The holy Mary's farewell word,
Who with deep eyes and wistful smile
Remembered Earth a little while.

Now from the coasts of morning pale
Comes safe to port thy tiny sail.
Now have we seen by early sun,
Thy miracle of life begun.
All breathing and aware thou art,
With beauty templed in thy heart
To let thee recognize the thrill
Of wings along far azure hill,
And hear within the hollow sky
Thy friends the angels rushing by.
These shall recall that thou hast known
Their distant country as thine own,
To spare thee word of vales and streams,
And publish heaven through thy dreams.
The human accents of the breeze
Through swaying star-acquainted trees
Shall seem a voice heard earlier,
Her voice, the adoring sigh of her,
When thou amid rosy cherub-play
Didst hear her call thee, far away,
And dream in very Paradise
The worship of thy mother's eyes.

Grace Hazard Conkling [1878-

TO LITTLE RENEE ON FIRST SEEING HER LYING IN HER CRADLE

Who is she here that now I see,
This dainty new divinity,
Love's sister, Venus' child? She shows
Her hues, white lily and pink rose,
And in her laughing eyes the snares
That hearts entangle unawares.
Ah, woe to men if Love should yield
His arrows to this girl to wield
Even in play, for she would give
Sore wounds that none might take and live.
Yet no such wanton strain is hers,
Nor Leda's child and Jupiter's
Is she, though swans no softer are
Than whom she fairer is by far.
For she was born beside the rill
That gushes from Parnassus' hill,
And by the bright Pierian spring
She shall receive an offering
From every youth who pipes a strain
Beside his flocks upon the plain.
But I, the first, this very day,
Will tune for her my humble lay,
Invoking this new Muse to render
My oaten reed more sweet and tender,
Within its vibrant hollows wake
Such dulcet voices for her sake
As, curved hand at straining ear,
I long have stood and sought to hear
Borne with the warm midsummer breeze
With scent of hay and hum of bees
Faintly from far-off Sicily....

Ah, well I know that not for us
Are Virgil and Theocritus,
And that the golden age is past
Whereof they sang, and thou, the last,
Sweet Spenser, of their god-like line,
Soar far too swift for verse of mine
One strain to compass of your song.
Yet there are poets that prolong
Of your rare voice the ravishment
In silver cadences; content
Were I if I could but rehearse
One stave of Wither's starry verse,
Weave such wrought richness as recalls
Britannia's lovely Pastorals,

Or in some garden-spot suspire
One breath of Marvell's magic fire
When in the green and leafy shade
He sees dissolving all that's made.
Ah, little Muse still far too high
On weak, clipped wings my wishes fly.
Transform them then and make them doves,
Soft-moaning birds that Venus loves,
That they may circle ever low
Above the abode where you shall grow
Into your gracious womanhood.
And you shall feed the gentle brood
From out your hand – content they'll be
Only to coo their songs to thee.

William Aspenwall Bradley [1878–

RHYME OF ONE

You sleep upon your mother's breast,
Your race begun,
A welcome, long a wished-for Guest,
Whose age is One.

A Baby-Boy, you wonder why
You cannot run;
You try to talk – how hard you try! –
You're only One.

Ere long you won't be such a dunce:
You'll eat your bun,
And fly your kite, like folk who once
Were only One.

You'll rhyme and woo, and fight and joke,
Perhaps you'll pun!
Such feats are never done by folk
Before they're One.

Some day, too, you may have your joy,
And envy none;
Yes, you, yourself, may own a Boy,
Who isn't One.

He'll dance, and laugh, and crow; he'll do
As you have done:
(You crown a happy home, though you
Are only One.)

But when he's grown shall you be here
To share his fun,
And talk of times when he (the Dear!)
Was hardly One?

Dear Child, 'tis your poor lot to be
My little Son;
I'm glad, though I am old, you see, –
While you are One.

Frederick Locker-Lampson [1821–1895]

TO A NEW-BORN CHILD

Small traveler from an unseen shore,
By mortal eye ne'er seen before,
To you, good-morrow.
You are as fair a little dame
As ever from a glad world came
To one of sorrow.

We smile above you, but you fret;
We call you gentle names, and yet
Your cries redouble.
'Tis hard for little babes to prize
The tender love that underlies
A life of trouble.

And have you come from Heaven to earth?
That were a road of little mirth,
A doleful travel.
"Why did I come?" you seem to cry,
But that's a riddle you and I
Can scarce unravel.

Perhaps you really wished to come,
But now you are so far from home
Repent the trial.
What! did you leave celestial bliss
To bless us with a daughter's kiss?
What self-denial!

Have patience for a little space,
You might have come to a worse place,
Fair Angel-rover.
No wonder now you would have stayed,
But hush your cries, my little maid,
The journey's over.

For, utter stranger as you are,
There yet are many hearts ajar
For your arriving,
And trusty friends and lovers true
Are waiting, ready-made for you,
Without your striving.

The earth is full of lovely things,
And if at first you miss your wings,
You'll soon forget them;
And others, of a rarer kind

Will grow upon your tender mind –
If you will let them –

Until you find that your exchange
Of Heaven for earth expands your range
E'en as a flier,
And that your mother, you and I,
If we do what we should, may fly
Than Angels higher.

Cosmo Monkhouse [1840–1901]

BABY MAY

Cheeks as soft as July peaches,
Lips whose dewy scarlet teaches
Poppies paleness – round large eyes
Ever great with new surprise,
Minutes filled with shadeless gladness,
Minutes just as brimmed with sadness,
Happy smiles and wailing cries,
Crows and laughs and tearful eyes,
Lights and shadows swifter born
Than on wind–swept Autumn corn,
Ever some new tiny notion
Making every limb all motion –
Catching up of legs and arms,
Throwings back and small alarms,
Clutching fingers – straightening jerks,
Twining feet whose each toe works,
Kickings up and straining risings,
Mother's ever new surprisings,
Hands all wants and looks all wonder
At all things the heavens under,
Tiny scorns of smiled reprovings
That have more of love than lovings,
Mischiefs done with such a winning
Archness, that we prize such sinning,
Breakings dire of plates and glasses,
Graspings small at all that passes,
Pullings off of all that's able
To be caught from tray or table;
Silences – small meditations,
Deep as thoughts of cares for nations,
Breaking into wisest speeches
In a tongue that nothing teaches,
All the thoughts of whose possessing
Must be wooed to light by guessing;
Slumbers – such sweet angel–seemings,
That we'd ever have such dreamings,
Till from sleep we see thee breaking,
And we'd always have thee waking;
Wealth for which we know no measure,
Pleasure high above all pleasure,
Gladness brimming over gladness,
Joy in care – delight in sadness,
Loveliness beyond completeness,
Sweetness distancing all sweetness,
Beauty all that beauty may be –
That's May Bennett, that's my baby.

William Cox Bennett [1820–1895]

ALICE

Of deepest blue of summer skies
Is wrought the heaven of her eyes.

Of that fine gold the autumns wear
Is wrought the glory of her hair.

Of rose leaves fashioned in the south
Is shaped the marvel of her mouth.

And from the honeyed lips of bliss
Is drawn the sweetness of her kiss,

'Mid twilight thrushes that rejoice
Is found the cadence of her voice,

Of winds that wave the western fir
Is made the velvet touch of her.

Of all earth's songs God took the half
To make the ripple of her laugh.

I hear you ask, "Pray who is she?" –
This maid that is so dear to me.

"A reigning queen in Fashion's whirl?"
Nay, nay! She is my baby girl.

Herbert Bashford [1871–1928]

SONGS FOR FRAGOLETTA

I

Fragoletta, blessed one!
What think you of the light of the sun?
Do you think the dark was best,
Lying snug in mother's breast?
Ah! I knew that sweetness, too,
Fragoletta, before you!
But, Fragoletta, now you're born,
You must learn to love the morn,
Love the lovely working light,
Love the miracle of sight,
Love the thousand things to do –
Little girl, I envy you! –
Love the thousand things to see,
Love your mother, and – love me!
And some night, Fragoletta, soon,
I'll take you out to see the moon;
And for the first time, child of ours,
You shall – think of it! – look on flowers,
And smell them, too, if you are good,
And hear the green leaves in the wood
Talking, talking, all together
In the happy windy weather;
And if the journey's not too far
For little limbs so lately made,
Limb upon limb like petals laid,
We'll go and picnic in a star.

II

Blue eyes, looking up at me,
I wonder what you really see,
Lying in your cradle there,
Fragrant as a branch of myrrh?
Helpless little hands and feet,
O so helpless! O so sweet!
Tiny tongue that cannot talk,
Tiny feet that cannot walk,
Nothing of you that can do
Aught, except those eyes of blue.
How they open, how they close! –
Eyelids of the baby-rose.
Open and shut – so blue, so wise,
Baby-eyelids, baby-eyes.

III

That, Fragoletta, is the rain
Beating upon the window-pane;
But lo! The golden sun appears,
To kiss away the window's tears.
That, Fragoletta, is the wind,
That rattles so the window-blind;
And yonder shining thing's a star,
Blue eyes – you seem ten times as far.
That, Fragoletta, is a bird
That speaks, yet never says a word;
Upon a cherry tree it sings,
Simple as all mysterious things;
Its little life to peck and pipe,
As long as cherries ripe and ripe,
And minister unto the need
Of baby-birds that feed and feed.
This, Fragoletta, is a flower,
Open and fragrant for an hour,
A flower, a transitory thing,
Each petal fleeting as a wing,
All a May morning blows and blows,
And then for everlasting goes.

IV

Blue eyes, against the whiteness pressed
Of little mother's hallowed breast,
The while your trembling lips are fed,
Look up at mother's bended head,
All benediction over you –
O blue eyes looking into blue!

Fragoletta is so small,
We wonder that she lives at all –
Tiny alabaster girl,
Hardly bigger than a pearl;
That is why we take such care,
Lest some one run away with her.

Richard Le Gallienne [1866–

CHOOSING A NAME

I have got a new-born sister:
I was nigh the first that kissed her.
When the nursing-woman brought her
To papa, his infant daughter,
How papa's dear eyes did glisten!
She will shortly be to christen;
And papa has made the offer,
I shall have the naming of her.

Now I wonder what would please her, –
Charlotte, Julia, or Louisa?
Ann and Mary, they're too common;
Joan's too formal for a woman;
Jane's a prettier name beside;
But we had a Jane that died.
They would say, if 'twas Rebecca,
That she was a little Quaker.
Edith's pretty, but that looks
Better in old English books;
Ellen's left off long ago;
Blanche is out of fashion now.
None that I have named as yet
Is so good as Margaret.
Emily is neat and fine;
What do you think of Caroline?
How I'm puzzled and perplexed
What to choose or think of next!
I am in a little fever
Lest the name that I should give her
Should disgrace her or defame her; –
I will leave papa to name her.

Mary Lamb [1764–1847]

WEIGHING THE BABY

"How many pounds does the baby weigh –
Baby who came but a month ago?
How many pounds from the crowning curl
To the rosy point of the restless toe?"

Grandfather ties the 'kerchief knot,
Tenderly guides the swinging weight,
And carefully over his glasses peers
To read the record, "only eight."

Softly the echo goes around:
The father laughs at the tiny girl;
The fair young mother sings the words,
While grandmother smooths the golden curl.

And stooping above the precious thing,
Nestles a kiss within a prayer,
Murmuring softly "Little one,
Grandfather did not weigh you fair."

Nobody weighed the baby's smile,
Or the love that came with the helpless one;
Nobody weighed the threads of care,
From which a woman's life is spun.

No index tells the mighty worth
Of a little baby's quiet breath –
A soft, unceasing metronome,
Patient and faithful until death.

Nobody weighed the baby's soul,
For here on earth no weights there be
That could avail; God only knows
Its value in eternity.

Only eight pounds to hold a soul
That seeks no angel's silver wing,
But shrines it in this human guise,
Within so frail and small a thing!

Oh, mother! laugh your merry note,
Be gay and glad, but don't forget
From baby's eyes looks out a soul
That claims a home in Eden yet.

Ethel Lynn Beers [1827–1879]

ETUDE REALISTE

I

A baby's feet, like seashells pink,
Might tempt, should heaven see meet,
An angel's lips to kiss, we think,
A baby's feet.

Like rose-hued sea-flowers toward the heat
They stretch and spread and wink
Their ten soft buds that part and meet.

No flower-bells that expand and shrink
Gleam half so heavenly sweet,
As shine on life's untrodden brink
A baby's feet.

II

A baby's hands, like rosebuds furled,
Where yet no leaf expands,
Ope if you touch, though close upcurled, –
A baby's hands.

Then, even as warriors grip their brands
When battle's bolt is hurled,
They close, clenched hard like tightening bands.

No rosebuds yet by dawn impearled
Match, even in loveliest lands,
The sweetest flowers in all the world, –
A baby's hands.

III

A baby's eyes, ere speech begin,
Ere lips learn words or sighs,
Bless all things bright enough to win
A baby's eyes.

Love, while the sweet thing laughs and lies,
And sleep flows out and in,
Sees perfect in them Paradise!

Their glance might cast out pain and sin,
Their speech make dumb the wise,
By mute glad godhead felt within

A baby's eyes.

Algernon Charles Swinburne [1837–1909]

LITTLE FEET

Two little feet, so small that both may nestle
In one caressing hand, –
Two tender feet upon the untried border
Of life's mysterious land.

Dimpled, and soft, and pink as peach–tree blossoms,
In April's fragrant days,
How can they walk among the briery tangles,
Edging the world's rough ways?

These rose–white feet, along the doubtful future,
Must bear a mother's load;
Alas! since Woman has the heavier burden,
And walks the harder road.

Love, for a while, will make the path before them
All dainty, smooth, and fair, –
Will cull away the brambles, letting only
The roses blossom there.

But when the mother's watchful eyes are shrouded
Away from sight of men,
And these dear feet are left without her guiding,
Who shall direct them then?

How will they be allured, betrayed, deluded,
Poor little untaught feet!
Into what dreary mazes will they wander,
What dangers will they meet?

Will they go stumbling blindly in the darkness
Of Sorrow's tearful shades?
Or find the upland slopes of Peace and Beauty,
Whose sunlight never fades?

Will they go toiling up Ambition's summit,
The common world above?
Or in some nameless vale, securely sheltered,
Walk side by side with Love?

Some feet there be which walk Life's track unwounded,
Which find but pleasant ways:
Some hearts there be to which this life is only
A round of happy days.

But these are few. Far more there are who wander

Without a hope or friend, –
Who find their journey full of pains and losses,
And long to reach the end.

How shall it be with her, the tender stranger,
Fair-faced and gentle-eyed,
Before whose unstained feet the world's rude highway
Stretches so fair and wide?

Ah! who may read the future? For our darling
We crave all blessings sweet,
And pray that He who feeds the crying ravens
Will guide the baby's feet.

Elizabeth Akers [1832–1911]

THE BABIE

Nae shoon to hide her tiny taes,
Nae stockin' on her feet;
Her supple ankles white as snaw,
Or early blossoms sweet.

Her simple dress o' sprinkled pink,
Her double, dimplit chin,
Her puckered lips, an' baumy mou',
With na ane tooth within.

Her een sae like her mither's een,
Twa gentle, liquid things;
Her face is like an angel's face, –
We're glad she has nae wings.

She is the buddin' of our luv,
A giftie God gied us:
We maun na luv the gift owre weel,
'Twad be nae blessin' thus.

We still maun luv the Giver mair,
An' see Him in the given;
An' sae she'll lead us up to Him,
Our babie straight frae Heaven.

Jeremiah Eames Rankin [1828–1904]

LITTLE HANDS

Soft little hands that stray and clutch,
Like fern fronds curl and uncurl bold,
While baby faces lie in such
Close sleep as flowers at night that fold,
What is it you would, clasp and hold,
Wandering outstretched with wilful touch?
O fingers small of shell-tipped rose,
How should you know you hold so much?
Two full hearts beating you inclose,
Hopes, fears, prayers, longings, joys and woes, –
All yours to hold, O little hands!
More, more than wisdom understands
And love, love only knows.

Laurence Binyon [1869–

BARTHOLOMEW

Bartholomew is very sweet,
From sandy hair to rosy feet.

Bartholomew is six months old,
And dearer far than pearls or gold.

Bartholomew has deep blue eyes,
Round pieces dropped from out the skies.

Bartholomew is hugged and kissed:
He loves a flower in either fist.

Bartholomew's my saucy son:
No mother has a sweeter one!

Norman Gale [1862–

THE STORM-CHILD

My child came to me with the equinox,
The wild wind blew him to my swinging door,
With flakes of tawny foam from off the shore,
And shivering spindrift whirled across the rocks.
Flung down the sky, the wheeling swallow-flocks
Cried him a greeting, and the lordly woods,
Waving lean arms of welcome one by one,
Cast down their russet cloaks and golden hoods,
And bid their dancing leaflets trip and run
Before the tender feet of this my son.

Therefore the sea's swift fire is in his veins,
And in his heart the glory of the sea;
Therefore the storm-wind shall his comrade be,
That strips the hills and sweeps the cowering plains.
October, shot with flashing rays and rains,
Inhabits all his pulses; he shall know
The stress and splendor of the roaring gales,
The creaking boughs shall croon him fairy tales,
And the sea's kisses set his blood aglow,
While in his ears the eternal bugles blow.

May Byron [1861-

"ON PARENT KNEES"

On parent knees, a naked new-born child,
Weeping thou sat'st while all around thee smiled:
So live, that, sinking to thy life's last sleep,
Calm thou may'st smile, while all around thee weep.

William Jones [1746–1794]

"PHILIP, MY KING"

"Who bears upon his baby brow the round and top of sovereignty."

Look at me with thy large brown eyes,
Philip, my king!
Round whom the enshadowing purple lies
Of babyhood's royal dignities.
Lay on my neck thy tiny hand
With love's invisible scepter laden;
I am thine Esther to command
Till thou shalt find a queen—handmaiden,
Philip, my king.

O the day when thou goest a—wooing,
Philip, my king!
When those beautiful lips are suing,
And some gentle heart's bars undoing,
Thou dost enter, love—crowned, and there
Sittest love—glorified. Rule kindly,
Tenderly, over thy kingdom fair,
For we that love, ah! we love so blindly,
Philip, my king.

Up from thy sweet mouth, — up to thy brow,
Philip, my king!
The spirit that there lies sleeping now
May rise like a giant and make men bow
As to one heaven—chosen among his peers.
My Saul, than thy brethren taller and fairer,
Let me behold thee in future years! —
Yet thy head needeth a circlet rarer,
Philip, my king.

— A wreath not of gold, but palm. One day,
Philip, my king!
Thou too must tread, as we trod, a way
Thorny and cruel and cold and gray:
Rebels within thee, and foes without,
Will snatch at thy crown. But march on, glorious,
Martyr, yet monarch! till angels shout,
As thou sittest at the feet of God victorious,
"Philip, the king!"

Dinah Maria Mulock Craik [1826–1887]

THE KING OF THE CRADLE

Draw back the cradle curtains, Kate,
While watch and ward you're keeping,
Let's see the monarch in his state,
And view him while he's sleeping.
He smiles and clasps his tiny hand,
With sunbeams o'er him gleaming, –
A world of baby fairyland
He visits while he's dreaming.

Monarch of pearly powder–puff,
Asleep in nest so cosy,
Shielded from breath of breezes rough
By curtains warm and rosy:
He slumbers soundly in his cell,
As weak as one decrepid,
Though King of Coral, Lord of Bell,
And Knight of Bath that's tepid.

Ah, lucky tyrant! Happy lot!
Fair watchers without number,
Who sweetly sing beside his cot,
And hush him off to slumber;
White hands in wait to smooth so neat
His pillow when its rumped –
A couch of rose leaves soft and sweet,
Not one of which is crumpled!

Will yonder dainty dimpled hand –
Size, nothing and a quarter –
E'er grasp a saber, lead a band
To glory and to slaughter?
Or, may I ask, will those blue eyes –
In baby patois, "peepers" –
E'er in the House of Commons rise,
And try to catch the Speaker's?

Will that smooth brow o'er Hansard frown,
Confused by lore statistic?
Or will those lips e'er stir the town
From pulpit ritualistic?
Will e'er that tiny Sybarite
Become an author noted?
That little brain the world's delight,
Its works by all men quoted?

Though rosy, dimpled, plump, and round

Though fragile, soft, and tender,
Sometimes, alas! it may be found
The thread of life is slender!
A little shoe, a little glove –
Affection never waning –
The shattered idol of our love
Is all that is remaining!

Then does one chance, in fancy, hear,
Small feet in childish patter,
Tread soft as they a grave draw near,
And voices hush their chatter;
'Tis small and new; they pause in fear,
Beneath the gray church tower,
To consecrate it with a tear,
And deck it with a flower.

Who can predict the future, Kate –
Your fondest aspiration!
Who knows the solemn laws of fate,
That govern all creation?
Who knows what lot awaits your boy –
Of happiness or sorrow?
Sufficient for to-day is joy,
Leave tears, Sweet, for to-morrow!

Joseph Ashby–Sterry [1838–1917]

THE FIRSTBORN

So fair, so dear, so warm upon my bosom,
And in my hands the little rosy feet.
Sleep on, my little bird, my lamb, my blossom;
Sleep on, sleep on, my sweet.

What is it God hath given me to cherish,
This living, moving wonder which is mine –
Mine only? Leave it with me or I perish,
Dear Lord of love divine.

Dear Lord, 'tis wonderful beyond all wonder,
This tender miracle vouchsafed to me,
One with myself, yet just so far asunder
That I myself may see.

Flesh of my flesh, and yet so subtly linking
New selfs with old, all things that I have been
With present joys beyond my former thinking
And future things unseen.

There life began, and here it links with heaven,
The golden chain of years scarce dipped adown
From birth, ere once again a hold is given
And nearer to God's Throne.

Seen, held in arms and clasped around so tightly, –
My love, my bird, I will not let thee go.
Yet soon the little rosy feet must lightly
Go pattering to and fro.

Mine, Lord, all mine Thy gift and loving token.
Mine – yes or no, unseen its soul divine?
Mine by the chain of love with links unbroken,
Dear Saviour, Thine and mine.

John Arthur Goodchild [1851–

NO BABY IN THE HOUSE

No baby in the house, I know,
'Tis far too nice and clean.
No toys, by careless fingers strewn,
Upon the floors are seen.
No finger-marks are on the panes,
No scratches on the chairs;
No wooden men setup in rows,
Or marshaled off in pairs;
No little stockings to be darned,
All ragged at the toes;
No pile of mending to be done,
Made up of baby-clothes;
No little troubles to be soothed;
No little hands to fold;
No grimy fingers to be washed;
No stories to be told;
No tender kisses to be given;
No nicknames, "Dove" and "Mouse";
No merry frolics after tea, –
No baby in the house!

Clara Dolliver [18 –

OUR WEE WHITE ROSE

From "The Mother's Idol Broken"

All in our marriage garden
Grew, smiling up to God,
A bonnier flower than ever
Sucked the green warmth of the sod;
O, beautiful unfathomably
Its little life unfurled;
And crown of all things was our wee
White Rose of all the world.

From out a balmy bosom
Our bud of beauty grew;
It fed on smiles for sunshine,
On tears for daintier dew:
Aye nestling warm and tenderly,
Our leaves of love were curled
So close and close about our wee
White Rose of all the world.

With mystical faint fragrance
Our house of life she filled;
Revealed each hour some fairy tower
Where winged hopes might build!
We saw – though none like us might see –
Such precious promise pearled
Upon the petals of our wee
White Rose of all the world.

But evermore the halo
Of angel–light increased,
Like the mystery of moonlight
That folds some fairy feast.
Snow–white, snow–soft, snow–silently
Our darling bud uncurled,
And dropped in the grave – God's lap – our wee
White Rose of all the world.

Our Rose was but in blossom,
Our life was but in spring,
When down the solemn midnight
We heard the spirits sing,
"Another bud of infancy
With holy dews imperled!"
And in their hands they bore our wee
White Rose of all the world.

You scarce could think so small a thing
Could leave a loss so large;
Her little light such shadow fling
From dawn to sunset's marge.
In other springs our life may be
In bannered bloom unfurled,
But never, never match our wee
White Rose of all the world.

Gerald Massey [1828–1907]

INTO THE WORLD AND OUT

Into the world he looked with sweet surprise;
The children laughed so when they saw his eyes.

Into the world a rosy hand in doubt
He reached – a pale hand took one rosebud out.

"And that was all – quite all!" No, surely! But
The children cried so when his eyes were shut.

Sarah M. B. Piatt [1836–1919]

"BABY SLEEPS"

She is not dead, but sleepeth. – Luke viii. 52.

The baby wept;
The mother took it from the nurse's arms,
And hushed its fears, and soothed its vain alarms,
And baby slept.

Again it weeps,
And God doth take it from the mother's arms,
From present griefs, and future unknown harms,

And baby sleeps.

Samuel Hinds [1793–1872]

BABY BELL

I

Have you not heard the poets tell
How came the dainty Baby Bell
Into this world of ours?
The gates of heaven were left ajar:
With folded hands and dreamy eyes,
Wandering out of Paradise,
She saw this planet, like a star,
Hung in the glistening depths of even –
Its bridges, running to and fro,
O'er which the white-winged Angels go,
Bearing the holy Dead to heaven.
She touched a bridge of flowers – those feet,
So light they did not bend the bells
Of the celestial asphodels,
They fell like dew upon the flowers:
Then all the air grew strangely sweet.
And thus came dainty Baby Bell
Into this world of ours.

II

She came and brought delicious May;
The swallows built beneath the eaves;
Like sunlight, in and out the leaves
The robins went, the livelong day;
The lily swung its noiseless bell;
And on the porch the slender vine
Held out its cups of fairy wine.
How tenderly the twilights fell!
Oh, earth was full of singing-birds
And opening springtide flowers,
When the dainty Baby Bell
Came to this world of ours.

III

O Baby, dainty Baby Bell,
How fair she grew from day to day!
What woman-nature filled her eyes,
What poetry within them lay –
Those deep and tender twilight eyes,
So full of meaning, pure and bright
As if she yet stood in the light
Of those oped gates of Paradise.

And so we loved her more and more:
Ah, never in our hearts before
Was love so lovely born:
We felt we had a link between
This real world and that unseen –
The land beyond the morn;
And for the love of those dear eyes,
For love of her whom God led forth,
(The mother's being ceased on earth
When Baby came from Paradise,) –
For love of Him who smote our lives,
And woke the chords of joy and pain,
We said, Dear Christ! – our hearts bowed down
Like violets after rain.

IV

And now the orchards, which were white
And pink with blossoms when she came,
Were rich in autumn's mellow prime;
The clustered apples burnt like flame,
The folded chestnut burst its shell,
The grapes hung purpling, range on range;
And time wrought just as rich a change
In little Baby Bell.
Her lissome form more perfect grew,
And in her features we could trace,
In softened curves, her mother's face.
Her angel–nature ripened too:
We thought her lovely when she came,
But she was holy, saintly now ...
Around her pale angelic brow
We saw a slender ring of flame.

V

God's hand had taken away the seal
That held the portals of her speech;
And oft she said a few strange words
Whose meaning lay beyond our reach.
She never was a child to us,
We never held her being's key;
We could not teach her holy things
Who was Christ's self in purity.

VI

It came upon us by degrees,
We saw its shadow ere it fell –
The knowledge that our God had sent
His messenger for Baby Bell.

We shuddered with unlanguage pain,
And all our hopes were changed to fears,
And all our thoughts ran into tears
Like sunshine into rain.
We cried aloud in our belief,
"Oh, smite us gently, gently, God!
Teach us to bend and kiss the rod,
And perfect grow through grief."
Ah! how we loved her, God can tell;
Her heart was folded deep in ours.
Our hearts are broken, Baby Bell!

VII

At last he came, the messenger,
The messenger from unseen lands:
And what did dainty Baby Bell?
She only crossed her little hands,
She only looked more meek and fair!
We parted back her silken hair,
We wove the roses round her brow –
White buds, the summer's drifted snow –
Wrapped her from head to foot in flowers ...
And thus went dainty Baby Bell
Out of this world of ours.

Thomas Bailey Aldrich [1837–1907]

The Home Book of Verse, V1

IN THE NURSERY

MOTHER GOOSE'S MELODIES

Mistress Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
With cockle-shells, and silver bells,
And pretty maids all in a row.

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe,

She had so many children she didn't know what to do;
She gave them some broth without any bread;
Then whipped them all soundly and put them to bed.

Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater,
Had a wife and couldn't keep her;
He put her in a pumpkin shell
And there he kept her very well.

Run-a-dub-dub,
Three men in a tub,
And who do you think they be?
The butcher, the baker,
The candlestick-maker;
Turn 'em out, knaves all three!

I'll tell you a story
About Jack a Nory –
And now my story's begun;
I'll tell you another
About Johnny, his brother –
And now my story is done.

Hickory, dickory, dock,
The mouse ran up the clock;
The clock struck one,
The mouse ran down,

Hickory, dickory, dock.

A dillar, a dollar,
A ten o'clock scholar,
What makes you come so soon?
You used to come at ten o'clock
But now you come at noon.

There was a little man,
And he had a little gun,
And his bullets were made of lead, lead, lead;
He shot Johnny Sprig
Through the middle of his wig,
And knocked it right off his head, head, head.

There was an old woman, and what do you think?
She lived upon nothing but victuals and drink:
Victuals and drink were the chief of her diet:
Yet this little old woman could never be quiet.

She went to a baker to buy her some bread,
And when she came home, her husband was dead;
She went to the clerk to toll the bell,
And when she came back her husband was well.

If I had as much money as I could spend,
I never would cry old chairs to mend;
Old chairs to mend, old chairs to mend;
I never would cry old chairs to mend.

If I had as much money as I could tell,
I never would cry old clothes to sell;
Old clothes to sell, old clothes to sell;
I never would cry old clothes to sell.

One misty, moisty morning,
When cloudy was the weather,
I met a little old man
Clothed all in leather;
He began to bow and scrape,
And I began to grin, –

How do you do, and how do you do,
And how do you do again?

If all the world were apple-pie,
And all the sea were ink,
And all the trees were bread and cheese,
What should we have to drink?

Pease-pudding hot,
Pease-pudding cold,
Pease-pudding in the pot,
Nine days old.
Some like it hot,
Some like it cold,
Some like it in the pot,
Nine days old.

Hey, diddle, diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon;
The little dog laughed
To see such sport,
And the dish ran away with the spoon.

Little Jack Horner sat in the corner
Eating a Christmas pie;
He put in his thumb, and pulled out a plum,
And said, "What a good boy am I!"

Little Miss Muffet,
Sat on a tuffet,
Eating of curds and whey;
There came a great spider
That sat down beside her,
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

There was a crooked man, and he went a crooked mile.
He found a crooked sixpence against a crooked stile:
He bought a crooked cat, which caught a crooked mouse,

And they all lived together in a little crooked house.

Little Polly Flinders,
Sat among the cinders,
Warming her pretty little toes;
Her mother came and caught her,
And whipped her little daughter
For spoiling her nice new clothes.

Barber, barber, shave a pig,
How many hairs will make a wig?
"Four-and-twenty, that's enough."
Give the barber a pinch of snuff.

Little Boy Blue, come blow up your horn,
The sheep's in the meadow, the cow's in the corn;
But where is the boy that looks after the sheep?
He's under a hay-cock, fast asleep.
Will you awake him? No, not I;
For if I do, he'll be sure to cry.

There was a man of our town,
And he was wondrous wise,
He jumped into a bramble bush,
And scratched out both his eyes:

But when he saw his eyes were out,
With all his might and main,
He jumped into another bush,
And scratched 'em in again.

The north wind doth blow,
And we shall have snow,
And what will poor Robin do then,
Poor thing?

He'll sit in a barn,
And to keep himself warm,
Will hide his head under his wing,
Poor thing!

Higgleby, piggleby, my black hen,
She lays eggs for gentlemen;
Sometimes nine, and sometimes ten,
Higgleby, piggleby, my black hen.

Three wise men of Gotham
Went to sea in a bowl;
If the bowl had been stronger,
My song had been longer.

There was an old woman lived under a hill,
And if she's not gone, she lives there still.

Pussy-cat, pussy-cat, where have you been?
I've been to London to look at the Queen.
Pussy-cat, pussy-cat, what did you there?
I frightened a little mouse under the chair.

There were two blackbirds sitting on a hill,
The one named Jack, the other named Jill;
Fly away, Jack! Fly away, Jill!
Come again, Jack! Come again, Jill!

Goosey, goosey, gander,
Whither shall I wander,
Up stairs, down stairs,
And in my lady's chamber.
There I met an old man
Who would not say his prayers;
I took him by his left leg
And threw him down the stairs.

Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool?
Yes, sir; yes, sir, three, bags full.
One for my master, one for my dame,
And one for the little boy that lives in the lane.

Bye, baby bunting,
Daddy's gone a-hunting
To get a little rabbit-skin
To wrap the baby bunting in.

Old King Cole was a merry old soul,
And a merry old soul was he;
He called for his pipe, and he called for his bowl,
And he called for his fiddlers three.
Every fiddler, he had a fiddle, and a very fine fiddle had he;
Twee tweedle dee, tweedle dee, went the fiddlers.
Oh, there's none so rare, as can compare
With King Cole and his fiddlers three!

Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross,
To see a fine lady ride on a white horse,
Rings on her fingers, and bells on her toes,
She shall have music wherever she goes.

Hector Protector was dressed all in green;
Hector Protector was sent to the Queen.
The Queen did not like him, no more did the King;
So Hector Protector was sent back again.

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers;
A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked;
If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers,
Where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?

Jack Sprat could eat no fat,
His wife could eat no lean,
And so, betwixt them both, you see,
They licked the platter clean.

The lion and the unicorn
Were fighting for the crown;

The lion beat the unicorn
All round about the town.
Some gave them white bread,
And some gave them brown;
Some gave them plum cake,
And sent them out of town.

As Tommy Snooks and Bessy Brooks
Were walking out one Sunday,
Says Tommy Snooks to Bessy Brooks,
"To-morrow will be Monday."

Curly locks! Curly locks!
Wilt thou be mine?
Thou shalt not wash dishes
Nor yet feed the swine;
But sit on a cushion
And sew a fine seam,
And feed upon strawberries,
Sugar and cream.

Blow, wind, blow! and go, mill, go!
That the miller may grind his corn;
That the baker may take it and into rolls make it,
And send us some hot in the morn.

Six little mice sat down to spin,
Pussy passed by, and she peeped in.
"What are you at, my little men?"
"Making coats for gentlemen."
"Shall I come in and bite off your threads?"
"No, no, Miss Pussy, you'll snip off our heads."
"Oh, no, I'll not, I'll help you to spin."
"That may be so, but you don't come in!"

Bobby Shaftoe's gone to sea,
Silver buckles at his knee;
When he comes back, he'll marry me,
Bonny Bobby Shaftoe.

Bobby Shaftoe's fat and fair,

Combing down his yellow hair;
He's my love for evermair,
Bonny Bobby Shaftoe.

Rock-a-bye, baby, thy cradle is green;
Father's a nobleman, mother's a queen;
And Betty's a lady, and wears a gold ring;
And Johnny's a drummer, and drums for the King.

Hush-a-bye, baby, on the tree-top,
When the wind blows the cradle will rock;
When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall,
Down will come baby, bough, cradle, and all.

To market, to market, to buy a fat pig,
Home again, home again, jiggety-jig;
To market, to market, to buy a fat hog,
Home again, home again, jiggety-jog;
To market, to market, to buy a plum bun,
Home again, home again, market is done.

JACK AND JILL

Jack and Jill went up the hill,
To fetch a pail of water;
Jack fell down and broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after.

Up Jack got and home did trot
As fast as he could caper,
And went to bed to mend his head
With vinegar and brown paper.

THE QUEEN OF HEARTS

The Queen of Hearts
She made some tarts,
All on a summer's day;
The Knave of Hearts
He stole those tarts,
And with them ran away.

The King of Hearts
Called for the tarts,
And beat the Knave full sore;
The Knave of Hearts
Brought back the tarts,
And vowed he'd steal no more!

LITTLE BO-PEEP

Little Bo-peep has lost her sheep,
And can't tell where to find them;
Leave them alone, and they'll come home,
And bring their tails behind them.

Little Bo-peep fell fast asleep,
And dreamed she heard them bleating;
But when she awoke, she found it a joke,
For they were still a-fleeting.

Then up she took her little crook,
Determined for to find them;
She found them indeed, but it made her heart bleed,
For they'd left their tails behind them!

It happened one day, as Bo-peep did stray,
Unto a meadow hard by,
There she espied their tails side by side,
All hung on a tree to dry.

She heaved a sigh, and wiped her eye,
And over the hillocks she raced;
And tried what she could, as a shepherdess should,
That each tail should be properly placed.

MARY'S LAMB

Mary had a little lamb,
Its fleece was white as snow,
And every where that Mary went
The lamb was sure to go;
He followed her to school one day –
That was against the rule,
It made the children laugh and play,
To see a lamb at school.

And so the Teacher turned him out,
But still he lingered near,
And waited patiently about,
Till Mary did appear;
And then he ran to her, and laid
His head upon her arm,
As if he said – "I'm not afraid –
You'll keep me from all harm."

"What makes the lamb love Mary so?"
The eager children cry –
"O, Mary loves the lamb, you know,"
The Teacher did reply; –
"And you each gentle animal
In confidence may bind,
And make them follow at your call,
If you are always kind."

Sarah Josepha Hale [1788–1879]

THE STAR

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are,
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.

When the blazing sun is set,
And the grass with dew is wet,
Then you show your little light,
Twinkle, twinkle, all the night.

Then the traveler in the dark
Thanks you for your tiny spark,
He could not see where to go
If you did not twinkle so.

In the dark blue sky you keep,
And often through my curtains peep,
For you never shut your eye
Till the sun is in the sky.

As your bright and tiny spark
Lights the traveler in the dark,
Though I know not what you are,
Twinkle, twinkle, little star.

Jane Taylor [1783–1824)

"SING A SONG OF SIXPENCE"

Sing a song of sixpence,
A pocket full of rye;
Four-and-twenty blackbirds
Baked in a pie;

When the pie was opened
The birds began to sing;
Wasn't that a dainty dish
To set before the King?

The King was in his counting-house,
Counting out his money;
The Queen was in the parlor,
Eating bread and honey;

The maid was in the garden
Hanging out the clothes;
When down came a blackbird,
And nipped off her nose.

SIMPLE SIMON

Simple Simon met a pieman
Going to the fair;
Says Simple Simon to the pieman,
"Let me taste your ware."

Says the pieman to Simple Simon,
"Show me first your penny";
Says Simple Simon to the pieman,
"Indeed I have not any."

Simple Simon went a-fishing
For to catch a whale;
All the water he had got
Was in his mother's pail.

Simple Simon went to look
If plums grew on a thistle;
He pricked his fingers very much,
Which made poor Simon whistle.

A PLEASANT SHIP

I saw a ship a-sailing,
A-sailing on the sea,
And oh! it was all laden
With pretty things for thee!

There were comfits in the cabin,
And apples in the hold;
The sails were made of silk,
And the masts were made of gold.

The four-and-twenty sailors
That stood between the decks
Were four-and-twenty white mice,
With chains about their necks.

The captain was a duck,
With a packet on his back,
And when the ship began to move,
The captain said "Quack! Quack!"

"I HAD A LITTLE HUSBAND"

I had a little husband
No bigger than my thumb;
I put him in a pint pot,
And there I bade him drum.

I bought a little horse,
That galloped up and down;
I bridled him and saddled him,
And sent him out of town.

I gave him some garters,
To garter up his hose,
And a little handkerchief,
To wipe his pretty nose.

"WHEN I WAS A BACHELOR"

When I was a bachelor
I lived by myself;
And all the bread and cheese I got
I put upon the shelf.

The rats and the mice
They made such a strife,
I was forced to go to London
To buy me a wife.

The streets were so bad,
And the lanes were so narrow,
I was forced to bring my wife home
In a wheelbarrow.

The wheelbarrow broke,
And my wife had a fall,
Down came wheelbarrow,
Little wife and all.

"JOHNNY SHALL HAVE A NEW BONNET"

Johnny shall have a new bonnet,
And Johnny shall go to the fair,
And Johnny shall have a blue ribbon

To tie up his bonny brown hair.

And why may not I love Johnny,
And why may not Johnny love me?
And why may not I love Johnny
As well as another body?

And here's a leg for a stocking,
And here's a foot for a shoe;
And he has a kiss for his daddy,

And one for his mammy, too.

And why may not I love Johnny,
And why may not Johnny love me?
And why may not I love Johnny,
As well as another body?

THE CITY MOUSE AND THE GARDEN MOUSE

The city mouse lives in a house; –
The garden mouse lives in a bower,
He's friendly with the frogs and toads,
And sees the pretty plants in flower.

The city mouse eats bread and cheese; –
The garden mouse eats what he can;
We will not grudge him seeds and stocks,
Poor little timid furry man.

Christina Georgina Rossetti [1830–1894]

ROBIN REDBREAST

Little Robin Redbreast sat upon a tree,
Up went pussy-cat, and down went he;
Down came pussy-cat, and away Robin ran;
Said little Robin Redbreast, "Catch me if you can."

Little Robin Redbreast jumped upon a wall,
Pussy-cat jumped after him, and almost got a fall;
Little Robin chirped and sang, and what did pussy say?
Pussy-cat said naught but "Mew," and Robin flew away.

SOLOMON GRUNDY

Solomon Grundy,
Born on a Monday,
Christened on Tuesday,
Married on Wednesday,
Took ill on Thursday,
Worse on Friday,
Died on Saturday,
Buried on Sunday,
This is the end of
Solomon Grundy.

"MERRY ARE THE BELLS"

Merry are the bells, and merry would they ring,
Merry was myself, and merry could I sing;
With a merry ding-dong, happy, gay, and free,
And a merry sing-song, happy let us be!

Waddle goes your gait, and hollow are your hose:
Noddle goes your pate, and purple is your nose:
Merry is your sing-song, happy, gay, and free;
With a merry ding-dong, happy let us be!

Merry have we met, and merry have we been;
Merry let us part, and merry meet again;
With our merry sing-song, happy, gay, and free,
With a merry ding-dong, happy let us be!

"WHEN GOOD KING ARTHUR RULED THIS LAND"

When good King Arthur ruled this land,
He was a goodly king;
He stole three pecks of barley meal,
To make a bag-pudding.

A bag-pudding the queen did make,
And stuffed it well with plums:
And in it put great lumps of fat,
As big as my two thumbs.

The king and queen did eat thereof,
And noblemen beside;
And what they could not eat that night,
The queen next morning fried.

THE BELLS OF LONDON

Gay go up, and gay go down,
To ring the bells of London town.

Bull's eyes and targets,
Say the bells of Saint Marg'ret's.

Brickbats and tiles,
Say the bells of Saint Giles'.

Half-pence and farthings,
Say the bells of Saint Martin's.

Oranges and lemons,
Say the bells of Saint Clement's.

Pancakes and fritters,
Say the bells of Saint Peter's.

Two sticks and an apple,
Say the bells of Whitechapel.

Old Father Baldpate,
Say the slow bells at Aldgate.

Pokers and tongs,
Say the bells of Saint John's.

Kettles and pans,
Say the bells of Saint Ann's.

You owe me ten shillings,
Say the bells of Saint Helen's.

When will you pay me?
Say the bells at Old Bailey.

When I grow rich,
Say the bells at Shoreditch.

Pray, when will that be?
Say the bells of Stepney.

I am sure I don't know,
Says the great bell at Bow.

THE OWL, THE EEL AND THE WARMING-PAN

The owl and the eel and the warming-pan,
They went to call on the soap-fat man.
The soap-fat man he was not within:
He'd gone for a ride on his rolling-pin.
So they all came back by the way of the town,
And turned the meeting-house upside down.

Laura E. Richards [1850-

THE COW

Thank you, pretty cow, that made
Pleasant milk to soak my bread,
Every day, and every night,
Warm, and fresh, and sweet, and white.

Do not chew the hemlock rank,
Growing on the weedy bank;
But the yellow cowslips eat,
They will make it very sweet.

Where the purple violet grows,
Where the bubbling water flows,
Where the grass is fresh and fine,
Pretty cow, go there and dine.

Ann Taylor [1782–1866]

THE LAMB

Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee,
Gave thee life, and bade thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee;
He is called by thy name,
For He calls Himself a Lamb.
He is meek, and He is mild;
He became a little child.
I a child, and thou a lamb,
We are called by His name.
Little Lamb, God bless thee!
Little Lamb, God bless thee.

William Blake [1757–1827]

LITTLE RAINDROPS

Oh, where do you come from,
You little drops of rain,
Pitter patter, pitter patter,
Down the window-pane?

They won't let me walk,
And they won't let me play,
And they won't let me go
Out of doors at all to-day.

They put away my playthings
Because I broke them all,
And then they locked up all my bricks,
And took away my ball.

Tell me, little raindrops,
Is that the way you play,
Pitter patter, pitter patter,
All the rainy day?

They say I'm very naughty,
But I've nothing else to do
But sit here at the window;
I should like to play with you.

The little raindrops cannot speak,
But "pitter, patter pat"
Means, "We can play on this side:
Why can't you play on that?"

"MOON, SO ROUND AND YELLOW"

Moon, so round and yellow,
Looking from on high,
How I love to see you
Shining in the sky.
Oft and oft I wonder,
When I see you there,
How they get to light you,
Hanging in the air:

Where you go at morning,
When the night is past,
And the sun comes peeping
O'er the hills at last.
Sometime I will watch you
Slyly overhead,
When you think I'm sleeping
Snugly in my bed.

Matthias Barr [1831-?]

THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT

This is the house that Jack built.

This is the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built.

This is the rat
That ate the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built.

This is the cat
That killed the rat
That ate the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built.

This is the dog
That worried the cat
That killed the rat
That ate the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built.

This is the cow with the crumpled horn
That tossed the dog
That worried the cat
That killed the rat
That ate the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built.

This is the maiden all forlorn
That milked the cow with the crumpled horn
That tossed the dog
That worried the cat
That killed the rat
That ate the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built.

This is the man all tattered and torn
That kissed the maiden
That milked the cow with the crumpled horn
That tossed the dog
That worried the cat
That killed the rat
That ate the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built.

This is the priest all shaven and shorn
That married the man all tattered and torn

That kissed the maiden all forlorn
That milked the cow with the crumpled horn
That tossed the dog
That worried the cat
That killed the rat
That ate the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built.

This is the cock that crowed in the morn
That waked the priest all shaven and shorn
That married the man all tattered and torn
That kissed the maiden all forlorn
That milked the cow with the crumpled horn
That tossed the dog
That worried the cat
That killed the rat
That ate the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built.

This is the farmer sowing his corn
That kept the cock that crowed in the morn
That waked the priest all shaven and shorn
That married the man all tattered and torn
That kissed the maiden all forlorn
That milked the cow with the crumpled horn
That tossed the dog
That worried the cat
That killed the rat
That ate the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built.

OLD MOTHER HUBBARD

Old Mother Hubbard
Went to the cupboard,
To get her poor dog a bone:
But when she got there
The cupboard was bare,
And so the poor dog had none.

She went to the baker's
To buy him some bread,
But when she came back
The poor dog was dead.

She went to the joiner's
To buy him a coffin,
But when she came back
The poor dog was laughing.

She took a clean dish
To get him some tripe,
But when she came back
He was smoking a pipe.

She went to the fishmonger's
To buy him some fish,
But when she came back
He was licking the dish.

She went to the tavern
For white wine and red,
But when she came back
The dog stood on his head.

She went to the hatter's
To buy him a hat,
But when she came back
He was feeding the cat.

She went to the barber's
To buy him a wig,
But when she came back
He was dancing a jig.

She went to the fruiterer's
To buy him some fruit,
But when she came back
He was playing the flute.

She went to the tailor's
To buy him a coat,
But when she came back
He was riding a goat.

She went to the cobbler's
To buy him some shoes,
But when she came back
He was reading the news.

She went to the seamstress
To buy him some linen,
But when she came back
The dog was spinning.

She went to the hosier's
To buy him some hose,
But when she came back
He was dressed in his clothes.

The dame made a curtesy,
The dog made a bow,
The dame said, "Your servant,"
The dog said, "Bow-wow."

This wonderful dog
Was Dame Hubbard's delight;
He could sing, he could dance,
He could read, he could write.

She gave him rich dainties
Whenever he fed,
And built him a monument
When he was dead.

THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF COCK ROBIN

Who killed Cock Robin?
"I," said the Sparrow,
"With my bow and arrow,
I killed Cock Robin."

Who saw him die?
"I" said the Fly,
"With my little eye,

I saw him die."

Who caught his blood?
"I," said the Fish,
"With my little dish,
I caught his blood."

Who'll make his shroud?
"I," said the Beetle,
"With my thread and needle,
I'll make his shroud."

Who'll dig his grave?
"I," said the Owl,
"With my spade and trowel,
I'll dig his grave."

Who'll be the parson?
"I," said the Rook,
"With my little book.
I'll be the parson."

Who'll be the clerk?
"I," said the Lark,
"I'll say Amen in the dark;
I'll be the clerk."

Who'll be chief mourner?
"I," said the Dove,
"I mourn for my love;
I'll be chief mourner."

Who'll bear the torch?
"I," said the Linnet,
"I'll come in a minute,
I'll bear the torch."

Who'll sing his dirge?
"I," said the thrush.
"As I sing in the bush
I'll sing his dirge."

Who'll bear the pall?
"We," said the Wren,
Both the Cock and the Hen;
"We'll bear the pall."

Who'll carry his coffin?
"I," said the Kite,
"If it be in the night,
I'll carry his coffin."

Who'll toll the bell?
"I," said the Bull,
"Because I can pull,
I'll toll the bell."

All the birds of the air
Fell to sighing and sobbing
When they heard the bell toll
For poor Cock Robin.

BABY-LAND

"Which is the way to Baby-land?"

"Any one can tell;
Up one flight,
To your right;
Please to ring the bell."

"What can you see in Baby-land?"

"Little folks in white –
Downy heads,
Cradle-beds,
Faces pure and bright!"

"What do they do in Baby-land?"

"Dream and wake and play,
Laugh and crow,
Shout and grow;
Jolly times have they!"

"What do they say in Baby-land?"

"Why, the oddest things;
Might as well
Try to tell
What a birdie sings!"

"Who is the Queen of Baby-land?"

"Mother, kind and sweet;
And her love,
Born above,
Guides the little feet."

George Cooper [1840–1927]

THE FIRST TOOTH

There once was a wood, and a very thick wood,
So thick that to walk was as much as you could;
But a sunbeam got in, and the trees understood.

I went to this wood, at the end of the snows,
And as I was walking I saw a primrose;
Only one! Shall I show you the place where it grows?

There once was a house, and a very dark house,
As dark, I believe, as the hole of a mouse,
Or a tree in my wood, at the thick of the boughs.

I went to this house, and I searched it aright,
I opened the chambers, and I found a light;
Only one! Shall I show you this little lamp bright?

There once was a cave, and this very dark cave
One day took a gift from an incoming wave;
And I made up my mind to know what the sea gave.

I took a lit torch, I walked round the ness
When the water was lowest; and in a recess
In my cave was a jewel. Will nobody guess?

O there was a baby, he sat on my knee,
With a pearl in his mouth that was precious to me,
His little dark mouth like my cave of the sea!

I said to my heart, "And my jewel is bright!
He blooms like a primrose! He shines like a light!"
Put your hand in his mouth! Do you feel? He can bite!

William Brighty Rands [1823–1882]

BABY'S BREAKFAST

Baby wants his breakfast,
Oh! what shall I do?
Said the cow, "I'll give him
Nice fresh milk – moo–oo!"

Said the hen, "Cut–dah cut!
I have laid an egg
For the Baby's breakfast –
Take it now, I beg!"

And the buzzing bee said,
"Here is honey sweet.
Don't you think the Baby
Would like that to eat?"

Then the baker kindly
Brought the Baby's bread.
"Breakfast is all ready,"
Baby's mother said;

"But before the Baby
Eats his dainty food,
Will he not say 'Thank you!'
To his friends so good?"

Then the bonny Baby
Laughed and laughed away.
That was all the "Thank you"
He knew how to say.

Emilie Poulsson [1853–

THE MOON

O, look at the moon!
She is shining up there;
O mother, she looks
Like a lamp in the air.

Last week she was smaller,
And shaped like a bow;
But now she's grown bigger,
And round as an O.

Pretty moon, pretty moon,
How you shine on the door,
And make it all bright
On my nursery floor!

You shine on my playthings,
And show me their place,
And I love to look up
At your pretty bright face.

And there is a star
Close by you, and maybe
That small twinkling star
Is your little baby.

Eliza Lee Fallen [1787–1859]

BABY AT PLAY

Brow bender, Eye peeper,
Nose smeller, Mouth eater,
Chin chopper,
Knock at the door – peep in,
Lift up the latch – walk in.

Here sits the Lord Mayor, here sit his two men,
Here sits the cock, and here sits the hen;
Here sit the chickens, and here they go in,
Chippety, chippety, chippety, chin.

This little pig went to market;
This little pig stayed at home;
This little pig got roast beef;
This little pig got none;
This little pig cried wee, wee, all the way home.

One, two,
Buckle my shoe;
Three, four,
Shut the door;
Five, six,
Pick up sticks;
Seven, eight,
Lay them straight;
Nine, ten,
A good fat hen;
Eleven, twelve,
Who will delve?
Thirteen, fourteen,
Maids a-courting;
Fifteen, sixteen,
Maids a-kissing;
Seventeen, eighteen,
Maids a-waiting;
Nineteen, twenty,
My stomach's empty.

THE DIFFERENCE

Eight fingers,
Ten toes,
Two eyes,
And one nose.
Baby said
When she smelt the rose,
"Oh! what a pity
I've only one nose!"

Ten teeth
In even rows,
Three dimples,
And one nose.
Baby said
When she smelt the snuff,
"Deary me!
One nose is enough."

Laura E. Richards [1850–

FOOT SOLDIERS

'Tis all the way to Toe-town,
Beyond the Knee-high hill,
That Baby has to travel down
To see the soldiers drill.

One, two, three, four, five, a-row –
A captain and his men –
And on the other side, you know,
Are six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

John Banister Tabb [1845–1909]

TOM THUMB'S ALPHABET

A was an Archer, who shot at a frog;
B was a Butcher, who had a great dog;
C was a Captain, all covered with lace;
D was a Drunkard, and had a red face;
E was an Esquire, with pride on his brow;
F was a Farmer, and followed the plow;
G was a Gamester, who had but ill luck;
H was a Hunter, who hunted a buck;
I was an Innkeeper, who loved to bouse;
J was a Joiner, who built up a house;
K was a King, so mighty and grand;
L was a Lady, who had a white hand;
M was a Miser, and hoarded his gold;
N was a Nobleman, gallant and bold;
O was an Oysterman, who went about town;
P was a Parson, and wore a black gown;
Q was a Quack, with a wonderful pill;
R was a Robber, who wanted to kill;
S was a Sailor, who spent all he got;
T was a Tinker, and mended a pot;
U was an Usurer, a miserable elf;
V was a Vintner, who drank all himself;
W was a Watchman, who guarded the door;
X was Expensive, and so became poor;
Y was a Youth, that did not love school;
Z was a Zany, a poor harmless fool.

GRAMMAR IN RHYME

Three little words, you often see,
Are articles A, An, and The.
A Noun is the name of anything,
As School, or Garden, Hoop, or Swing.
Adjectives tell the kind of Noun,
As Great, Small, Pretty, White, or Brown.
Instead of Nouns the Pronouns stand,
Her head, His face, Your arm, My hand.
Verbs tell something being done –
To Read, Count, Laugh, Sing, Jump, or Run.
How things are done the Adverbs tell,
As Slowly, Quickly, Ill, or Well.
Conjunctions join the words together –
As men And women, wind Or weather.
The Preposition stands before
A noun, as In or Through a door,
The Interjection shows surprise,
As Oh! how pretty! Ah! how wise!
The Whole are called nine parts of speech,
Which reading, writing, speaking teach.

DAYS OF THE MONTH

Thirty days hath September,
April, June, and November;
All the rest have thirty-one;
February twenty-eight alone, –
Except in leap year, at which time
February's days are twenty-nine.

THE GARDEN YEAR

January brings the snow,
Makes our feet and fingers glow.

February brings the rain,
Thaws the frozen lake again.

March brings breezes, loud and shrill,
To stir the dancing daffodil.

April brings the primrose sweet,
Scatters daisies at our feet.

May brings flocks of pretty lambs
Skipping by their fleecy dams.

June brings tulips, lilies, roses,
Fills the children's hands with posies.

Hot July brings cooling showers,
Apricots, and gillyflowers.

August brings the sheaves of corn,
Then the harvest home is borne.

Warm September brings the fruit;
Sportsmen then begin to shoot.

Fresh October brings the pheasant;
Then to gather nuts is pleasant.

Dull November brings the blast;
Then the leaves are whirling fast.

Chill December brings the sleet,
Blazing fire, and Christmas treat.

Sara Coleridge [1802–1852]

RIDDLES

There was a girl in our town,
Silk an' satin was her gown,
Silk an' satin, gold an' velvet,
Guess her name, three times I've telled it.
(Ann.)

As soft as silk, as white as milk,
As bitter as gall, a thick green wall,
And a green coat covers me all.
(A walnut.)

Make three fourths of a cross,
And a circle complete;
And let two semicircles
On a perpendicular meet;
Next add a triangle
That stands on two feet;
Next two semicircles,
And a circle complete.
(TOBACCO.)

Flour of England, fruit of Spain,
Met together in a shower of rain;
Put in a bag tied round with a string,
If you'll tell me this riddle, I'll give you a ring.
(A plum-pudding.)

In marble walls as white as milk,
Lined with a skin as soft as silk,
Within a fountain crystal clear,
A golden apple doth appear.
No doors there are to this stronghold,
Yet thieves break in and steal the gold.
(An egg.)

Little Nanny Etticoat,
In a white petticoat,
And a red nose;
The longer she stands,
The shorter she grows.
(A candle.)

Long legs, crooked thighs,
Little head and no eyes.
(A pair of tongs.)

Thirty white horses upon a red hill,
Now they tramp, now they champ, now they stand still.
(The teeth.)

Formed long ago, yet made to-day,
Employed while others sleep;
What few would like to give away,
Nor any wish to keep.
(A bed.)

Lives in winter,
Dies in summer,
And grows with its root upwards.
(An icicle.)

Elizabeth, Lizzy, Betsy and Bess,
All went together to seek a bird's nest;
They found a nest with five eggs in it;
They each took one and left four in it.

Thomas a Tattamus took two T's,
To tie two tups to two tall trees,
To frighten the terrible Thomas a Tattamus!
Tell me how many T's there are in all THAT!

Old Mother Twitchett had but one eye,
And a long tail which she let fly;
And every time she went over a gap,
She left a bit of her tail in a trap.
(A needle and thread.)

As I went through a garden gap,
Who should I meet but Dick Red-Cap!
A stick in his hand, a stone in his throat,
If you'll tell me this riddle, I'll give you a goat.
(A cherry.)

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Cannot put Humpty Dumpty together again.
(An egg.)

As I was going to St. Ives,
I met a man with seven wives,
Every wife had seven sacks,
Every sack had seven cats,
Every cat had seven kits –
Kits, cats, sacks, and wives,
How many were going to St. Ives?
(One.)

Two legs sat upon three legs,
With one leg in his lap;
In comes four legs
And runs away with one leg;
Up jumps two legs,
Catches up three legs,
Throws it after four legs,
And makes him drop one leg.
(A man, a stool, a leg of mutton, and a dog.)

PROVERBS

If wishes were horses,
Beggars would ride;
If turnips were watches,
I'd wear one by my side.

A man of words, and not of deeds,
Is like a garden full of weeds;
For when the weeds begin to grow,
Then doth the garden overflow.

He that would thrive
Must rise at five;
He that hath thriven
May lie till seven;
And he that by the plough would thrive,
Himself must either hold or drive.

A swarm of bees in May
Is worth a load of hay;
A swarm of bees in June
Is worth a silver spoon;
A swarm of bees in July
Is not worth a fly.

They that wash on Monday
Have all the week to dry;
They that wash on Tuesday
Are not so much awry;
They that wash on Wednesday
Are not so much to blame;
They that wash on Thursday,
Wash for shame;
They that wash on Friday,
Wash in need;
And they that wash on Saturday,
Oh, they are slovens, indeed.

Needles and pins, needles and pins,
When a man marries, his trouble begins.

For every evil under the sun,
There is a remedy, or there is none.
If there be one, try and find it;
If there be none, never mind it.

Tommy's tears, and Mary's fears,

Will make them old before their years.

If "ifs" and "ands"
Were pots and pans,
There would be no need for tinkers!

For want of a nail, the shoe was lost;
For want of the shoe, the horse was lost;
For want of the horse, the rider was lost;
For want of the rider, the battle was lost;
For want of the battle, the kingdom was lost;
And all from the want of a horseshoe nail.

KIND HEARTS

Kind hearts are the gardens,
Kind thoughts are the roots,
Kind words are the blossoms,
Kind deeds are the fruits;
Love is the sweet sunshine
That warms into life,
For only in darkness
Grow hatred and strife.

WEATHER WISDOM

A sunshiny shower
Won't last half an hour.

Rain before seven,
Fair by eleven.

The South wind brings wet weather,
The North wind wet and cold together;
The West wind always brings us rain,
The East wind blows it back again.

March winds and April showers
Bring forth May flowers.

Evening red and morning gray
Set the traveller on his way,
But evening gray and morning red,
Bring the rain upon his head.

Rainbow at night
Is the sailor's delight;
Rainbow at morning,
Sailors, take warning.

OLD SUPERSTITIONS

See a pin and pick it up,
All the day you'll have good luck;
See a pin and let it lay,
Bad luck you will have all day.

Cut your nails on Monday, cut them for news;
Cut them on Tuesday, a pair of new shoes;
Cut them on Wednesday, cut them for health;
Cut them on Thursday, cut them for wealth;
Cut them on Friday, cut them for woe;
Cut them on Saturday, a journey you'll go;
Cut them on Sunday, you'll cut them for evil,
For all the next week you'll be ruled by the devil.

Marry Monday, marry for wealth;
Marry Tuesday, marry for health;
Marry Wednesday, the best day of all;
Marry Thursday, marry for crosses;
Marry Friday, marry for losses;
Marry Saturday, no luck at all.

Sneeze on a Monday, you sneeze for danger;
Sneeze on a Tuesday, you'll kiss a stranger;
Sneeze on a Wednesday, you sneeze for a letter;
Sneeze on a Thursday, for something better;
Sneeze on a Friday, you sneeze for sorrow;
Sneeze on a Saturday, your sweetheart to-morrow;
Sneeze on a Sunday, your safety seek –
The devil will have you the whole of the week.

Monday's child is fair of face,
Tuesday's child is full of grace,
Wednesday's child is full of woe,
Thursday's child has far to go,
Friday's child is loving and giving,
Saturday's child works hard for its living,
And a child that's born on the Sabbath day
Is fair and wise and good and gay.

THE ROAD TO SLUMBERLAND

WYNKEN, BLYNKEN, AND NOD

Dutch Lullaby

Wynken, Blynken, and Nod one night
Sailed off in a wooden shoe, –
Sailed on a river of crystal light
Into a sea of dew.
"Where are you going, and what do you wish?"
The old moon asked the three.
"We have come to fish for the herring fish
That live in this beautiful sea;
Nets of silver and gold have we!"
Said Wynken,
Blynken,
And Nod.

The old moon laughed and sang a song,
As they rocked in the wooden shoe;
And the wind that sped them all night long
Ruffled the waves of dew.
The little stars were the herring fish
That lived in that beautiful sea –
"Now cast your nets wherever you wish, –
Never afeard are we!"
So cried the stars to the fishermen three,
Wynken,
Blynken,
And Nod.

All night long their nets they threw
To the stars in the twinkling foam, –
Then down from the skies came the wooden shoe,
Bringing the fishermen home:
'Twas all so pretty a sail, it seemed
As if it could not be;
And some folk thought 'twas a dream they'd dreamed
Of sailing that beautiful sea;
But I shall name you the fishermen three:
Wynken,
Blynken,
And Nod.

Wynken and Blynken are two little eyes,
And Nod is a little head,
And the wooden shoe that sailed the skies
Is a wee one's trundle-bed;
So shut your eyes while Mother sings

The Home Book of Verse, V1

Of wonderful sights that be,
And you shall see the beautiful things
As you rock in the misty sea
Where the old shoe rocked the fishermen three: –
Wynken,
Blynken,
And Nod.

Eugene Field [1850–1895]

THE SUGAR-PLUM TREE

Have you ever heard of the Sugar-Plum Tree?
'Tis a marvel of great renown!
It blooms on the shore of the Lollypop sea
In the garden of Shut-Eye Town;
The fruit that it bears is so wondrously sweet
(As those who have tasted it say)
That good little children have only to eat
Of that fruit to be happy next day.

When you've got to the tree, you would have a hard time
To capture the fruit which I sing;
The tree is so tall that no person could climb
To the boughs where the sugar-plums swing!
But up in that tree sits a chocolate cat,
And a gingerbread dog prowls below –
And this is the way you contrive to get at
Those sugar-plums tempting you so:

You say but the word to that gingerbread dog
And he barks with such terrible zest
That the chocolate cat is at once all agog,
As her swelling proportions attest.
And the chocolate cat goes cavorting around
From this leafy limb unto that,
And the sugar-plums tumble, of course, to the ground –
Hurrah for that chocolate cat!

There are marshmallows, gumdrops, and peppermint canes,
With stripings of scarlet or gold,
And you carry away of the treasure that rains,
As much as your apron can hold!
So come, little child, cuddle closer to me
In your dainty white nightcap and gown,
And I'll rock you away to that Sugar-Plum Tree
In the garden of Shut-Eye Town.

Eugene Field [1850–1895]

WHEN THE SLEEPY MAN COMES

When the Sleepy Man comes with the dust on his eyes,
(Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary!)
He shuts up the earth, and he opens the skies.
(So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie!)

He smiles through his fingers, and shuts up the sun;
(Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary!)
The stars that he loves he lets out one by one.
(So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie!)

He comes from the castles of Drowsy-boy Town;
(Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary!)
At the touch of his hand the tired eyelids fall down.
(So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie!)

He comes with a murmur of dream in his wings;
(Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary!)
And whispers of mermaids and wonderful things.
(So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie!)

Then the top is a burden, the bugle a bane;
(Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary!)
When one would be faring down Dream-a-way Lane.
(So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie!)

When one would be wending in Lullaby Wherry,
(Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary!)
To Sleepy Man's Castle, by Comforting Ferry.
(So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie!)

Charles G. D. Roberts [1860-

AULD DADDY DARKNESS

Auld Daddy Darkness creeps frae his hole,
Black as a blackamoor, blin' as a mole:
Stir the fire till it lowes, let the bairnie sit,
Auld Daddy Darkness is no wantit yit.

See him in the corners hidin' frae the licht,
See him at the window gloomin' at the nicht;
Turn up the gas licht, close the shutters a',
An' Auld Daddy Darkness will flee far awa'.

Awa' to hide the birdie within its cosy nest,
Awa' to lap the wee flooers on their mither's breast,
Awa' to loosen Gaffer Toil frae his daily ca',
For Auld Daddy Darkness is kindly to a'.

He comes when we're weary to wean's frae oor waes,
He comes when the bairnies are getting aff their claes;
To cover them sae cosy, an' bring bonnie dreams,
So Auld Daddy Darkness is better than he seems.

Steek yer een, my wee tot, ye'll see Daddy then;
He's in below the bed claes, to cuddle ye he's fain;
Noo nestle to his bosie, sleep and dream yer fill,
Till Wee Davie Daylicht comes keekin' owre the hill.

James Ferguson [18 – ?]

WILLIE WINKIE

Wee Willie Winkie rins through the town,

Upstairs and doon stairs, in his nicht-gown,
Tirlin' at the window, cryin' at the lock,
"Are the weans in their bed? – for it's noo ten o'clock."

Hey, Willie Winkie! are ye comin' ben?
The cat's singin' gay thrums to the sleepin' hen,
The doug's speldered on the floor, and disna gie a cheep;
But here's a waukrife laddie, that winna fa' asleep.

Anything but sleep, ye rogue! – glowrin' like the moon,
Rattlin' in an airn jug wi' an airn spoon,
Rumblin', tumblin' roun' about, crawin' like a cock,
Skirlin' like a kenna-what – wauknin' sleepin' folk!

Hey, Willie Winkie! the wean's in a creel!
Waumblin' aff a bodie's knee like a vera eel,
Ruggin' at the cat's lug, and ravellin' a' her thrums:
Hey, Willie Winkie! – See, there he comes!

William Miller [1810–1872]

THE SANDMAN

The rosy clouds float overhead,
The sun is going down;
And now the sandman's gentle tread
Comes stealing through the town.
"White sand, white sand," he softly cries,
And as he shakes his hand,
Straightway there lies on babies' eyes
His gift of shining sand.
Blue eyes, gray eyes, black eyes, and brown,
As shuts the rose, they softly close, when he goes through the town.

From sunny beaches far away –
Yes, in another land –
He gathers up at break of day
His stone of shining sand.
No tempests beat that shore remote,
No ships may sail that way;
His little boat alone may float
Within that lovely bay.
Blue eyes, gray eyes, black eyes, and brown,
As shuts the rose, they softly close, when he goes through the town.

He smiles to see the eyelids close
Above the happy eyes;
And every child right well he knows, –
Oh, he is very wise!
But if, as he goes through the land,
A naughty baby cries,
His other hand takes dull gray sand
To close the wakeful eyes.
Blue eyes, gray eyes, black eyes, and brown,
As shuts the rose, they softly close, when he goes through the town.

So when you hear the sandman's song
Sound through the twilight sweet,
Be sure you do not keep him long
A–waiting in the street.
Lie softly down, dear little head,
Rest quiet, busy hands,
Till, by your bed his good–night said,
He strews the shining sands.
Blue eyes, gray eyes, black eyes, and brown,
As shuts the rose, they softly close, when he goes through the town.

Margaret Thomson Janvier [1845–1913]

THE DUSTMAN

When the toys are growing weary,
And the twilight gathers in;
When the nursery still echoes
With the children's merry din;
Then unseen, unheard, unnoticed
Comes an old man up the stair,
Lightly to the children passes,
Lays his hand upon their hair.

Softly smiles the good old Dustman;
In their eyes the dust he throws,
Till their little heads are falling,
And their weary eyes must close.
Then the Dustman very gently
Takes each little dimpled hand
Leads them through the sweet green shadows,
Far away in slumberland.

Frederic Edward Weatherly [1848–1929]

SEPHESTIA'S LULLABY

From "Menaphon"

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee;
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.
Mother's wag, pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy;
When thy father first did see
Such a boy by him and me,
He was glad, I was woe;
Fortune changed made him so,
When he left his pretty boy,
Last his sorrow, first his joy.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee;
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.
Streaming tears that never stint,
Like pearl-drops from a flint,
Fell by course from his eyes,
That one another's place supplies;
Thus he grieved in every part,
Tears of blood fell from his heart,
When he left his pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee;
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.
The wanton smiled, father wept,
Mother cried, baby leapt;
More he crowed, more we cried,
Nature could not sorrow hide:
He must go, he must kiss
Child and mother, baby bliss,
For he left his pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy.
Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.

Robert Greene [1560?–1592]

"GOLDEN SLUMBERS KISS YOUR EYES"

From "Patient Grissel"

Golden slumbers kiss your eyes,
Smiles awake you when you rise.
Sleep, pretty wantons, do not cry,
And I will sing a lullaby.
Rock them, rock them, lullaby.

Care is heavy, therefore sleep you,
You are care, and care must keep you.
Sleep, pretty wantons, do not cry,
And I will sing a lullaby.
Rock them, rock them, lullaby.

Thomas Dekker [1570?-1641?]

"SLEEP, BABY, SLEEP"

Sleep, baby, sleep! what ails my dear,
What ails my darling thus to cry?
Be still, my child, and lend thine ear,
To hear me sing thy lullaby.
My pretty lamb, forbear to weep;
Be still, my dear; sweet baby, sleep.

Thou blessed soul, what canst thou fear?
What thing to thee can mischief do?
Thy God is now thy father dear,
His holy Spouse thy mother too.
Sweet baby, then forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

Though thy conception was in sin,
A sacred bathing thou hast had;
And though thy birth unclean hath been,
A blameless babe thou art now made.
Sweet baby, then forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

While thus thy lullaby I sing,
For thee great blessings ripening be;
Thine Eldest Brother is a king,
And hath a kingdom bought for thee.
Sweet baby, then forbear to weep;

Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

Sweet baby, sleep, and nothing fear;
For whosoever thee offends
By thy protector threatened are,
And God and angels are thy friends.
Sweet baby, then forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

When God with us was dwelling here,
In little babes He took delight;
Such innocents as thou, my dear,
Are ever precious in His sight.
Sweet baby, then forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

A little infant once was He;
And strength in weakness then was laid
Upon His Virgin Mother's knee,

That power to thee might be conveyed.
Sweet baby, then forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

In this thy frailty and thy need
He friends and helpers doth prepare,
Which thee shall cherish, clothe, and feed,
For of thy weal they tender are.
Sweet baby, then forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

The King of Kings when He was born,
Had not so much for outward ease;
By Him such dressings were not worn,
Nor such like swaddling-clothes as these.
Sweet baby, then forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby sleep.

Within a manger lodged thy Lord,
Where oxen lay and asses fed:
Warm rooms we do to thee afford,
An easy cradle for a bed.
Sweet baby, then forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

The wants that He did then sustain
Have purchased wealth, my babe, for thee,
And by His torments and His pain
Thy rest and ease secured be.
My baby, then forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

Thou hast, yet more, to perfect this
A promise and an earnest got
Of gaining everlasting bliss,
Though thou, my babe, perceiv'st it not.
Sweet baby, then forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

George Wither [1588–1667]

MOTHER'S SONG

My heart is like a fountain true
That flows and flows with love to you.
As chirps the lark unto the tree
So chirps my pretty babe to me.
And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

There's not a rose where'er I seek,
As comely as my baby's cheek.
There's not a comb of honey-bee,
So full of sweets as babe to me.
And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

There's not a star that shines on high,
Is brighter than my baby's eye.
There's not a boat upon the sea,
Can dance as baby does to me.
And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

No silk was ever spun so fine
As is the hair of baby mine.
My baby smells more sweet to me
Than smells in spring the elder tree.
And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

A little fish swims in the well,
So in my heart does baby dwell.
A little flower blows on the tree,
My baby is the flower to me.
And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

The Queen has sceptre, crown and ball,
You are my sceptre, crown and all.
For all her robes of royal silk,
More fair your skin, as white as milk.
And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

Ten thousand parks where deer do run,
Ten thousand roses in the sun,
Ten thousand pearls beneath the sea,
My babe more precious is to me.
And it's O! sweet, sweet! and a lullaby.

Unknown

A LULLABY

Upon my lap my sovereign sits
And sucks upon my breast;
Meanwhile his love sustains my life
And gives my body rest.
Sing lullaby, my little boy,
Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

When thou hast taken thy repast,
Repose, my babe, on me;
So may thy mother and thy nurse
Thy cradle also be.
Sing lullaby, my little boy,
Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

I grieve that duty doth not work
All that my wishing would,
Because I would not be to thee
But in the best I should.
Sing lullaby, my little boy,
Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

Yet as I am, and as I may,
I must and will be thine,
Though all too little for thy self
Vouchsafing to be mine.
Sing lullaby, my little boy,
Sing lullaby, mine only joy!

Richard Rowlands [fl. 1565–1620]

A CRADLE HYMN

Hush! my dear, lie still and slumber,
Holy angels guard thy bed!
Heavenly blessings without number
Gently falling on thy head.

Sleep, my babe; thy food and raiment,
House and home, thy friends provide;
All without thy care or payment:
All thy wants are well supplied.

How much better thou'rt attended
Than the Son of God could be,
When from heaven He descended
And became a child like thee!

Soft and easy is thy cradle:
Coarse and hard thy Saviour lay,
When His birthplace was a stable
And His softest bed was hay.

Blessed babe! what glorious features –
Spotless fair, divinely bright!
Must He dwell with brutal creatures?
How could angels bear the sight?

Was there nothing but a manger
Cursed sinners could afford
To receive the heavenly stranger?
Did they thus affront their Lord?

Soft, my child: I did not chide thee,
Though my song might sound too hard;
'Tis thy mother sits beside thee,
And her arms shall be thy guard.

Yet to read the shameful story
How the Jews abused their King,
How they served the Lord of Glory,
Makes me angry while I sing.

See the kinder shepherds round Him,
Telling wonders from the sky!
Where they sought Him, there they found Him,
With His Virgin mother by.

See the lovely babe a-dressing;

Lovely infant, how He smiled!
When He wept, the mother's blessing
Soothed and hushed the holy child.

Lo, He slumbers in His manger,
Where the horned oxen fed;
Peace, my darling; here's no danger,
Here's no ox anear thy bed.

'Twas to save thee, child, from dying,
Save my dear from burning flame,
Bitter groans and endless crying,
That thy blest Redeemer came.

May'st thou live to know and fear Him,
Trust and love Him all thy days;
Then go dwell forever near Him,
See His face, and sing His praise!

Isaac Watts [1674–1748]

CRADLE SONG

Sleep, sleep, beauty bright,
Dreaming in the joys of night;
Sleep, sleep; in thy sleep
Little sorrows sit and weep.

Sweet babe, in thy face
Soft desires I can trace,
Secret joys and secret smiles,
Little pretty infant wiles.

As thy softest limbs I feel
Smiles as of the morning steal
O'er thy cheek, and o'er thy breast
Where thy little heart doth rest.

O the cunning wiles that creep
In thy little heart asleep!
When thy little heart doth wake,
Then the dreadful night shall break.

William Blake [1757–1827]

LULLABY

Baloo, loo, lammy, now baloo, my dear,
Does wee lammy ken that its daddy's no here?
Ye're rocking full sweetly on mammy's warm knee,
But daddy's a-rocking upon the salt sea.

Now hushaby, lammy, now hushaby, dear;
Now hushaby, lammy, for mother is near.
The wild wind is raving, and mammy's heart's sair;
The wild wind is raving, and ye dinna care.

Sing baloo, loo, lammy, sing baloo, my dear;
Sing baloo, loo, lammy, for mother is here.
My wee bairnie's dozing, it's dozing now fine,
And O may its wakening be blither than mine!

Carolina Nairne [1763–1845]

LULLABY OF AN INFANT CHIEF

O, hush thee, my babie, thy sire was a knight,
Thy mother a lady, both lovely and bright;
The woods and the glens, from the towers which we see,
They are all belonging, dear babie, to thee.
O ho ro, i ri ri, cadul gu lo.

O, fear not the bugle, though loudly it blows,
It calls but the warders that guard thy repose;
Their bows would be bended, their blades would be red,
Ere the step of a foeman draws near to thy bed.
O ho ro, i ri ri, cadul gu lo.

O, hush thee, my babie, the time soon will come,
When thy sleep shall be broken by trumpet and drum;
Then hush thee, my darling, take rest while you may,
For strife comes with manhood, and waking with day.
O ho ro, i ri ri, cadul gu lo.

Walter Scott [1771–1832]

GOOD-NIGHT

Little baby, lay your head
On your pretty cradle-bed;
Shut your eye-peeps, now the day
And the light are gone away;
All the clothes are tucked in tight;
Little baby dear, good-night.

Yes, my darling, well I know
How the bitter wind doth blow;
And the winter's snow and rain
Patter on the window-pane:
But they cannot come in here,
To my little baby dear;

For the window shutteth fast,
Till the stormy night is past;
And the curtains warm are spread
Round about her cradle bed:
So till morning shineth bright,
Little baby dear, good-night.

Jane Taylor [1783-1824]

"LULLABY, O LULLABY"

Lullaby! O lullaby!
Baby, hush that little cry!
Light is dying,
Bats are flying,
Bees to-day with work have done;
So, till comes the morrow's sun,
Let sleep kiss those bright eyes dry!
Lullaby! O lullaby.

Lullaby! O lullaby!
Hushed are all things far and nigh;
Flowers are closing,
Birds reposing,
All sweet things with life are done.
Sweet, till dawns the morning sun,
Sleep, then kiss those blue eyes dry.
Lullaby! O lullaby!

William Cox Bennett [1820–1895]

LULLABY

From "The Princess"

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
Wind of the western sea!
Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dying moon, and blow,
Blow him again to me;
While my little one, while my pretty one, sleeps.

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
Father will come to thee soon;
Rest, rest, on mother's breast,
Father will come to thee soon;
Father will come to his babe in the nest,
Silver sails all out of the west
Under the silver moon:
Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one, sleep.

Alfred Tennyson [1809–1892]

THE COTTAGER TO HER INFANT

The days are cold, the nights are long,
The north-wind sings a doleful song;
Then hush again upon my breast;
All merry things are now at rest,
Save thee, my pretty love!

The kitten sleeps upon the hearth;
The crickets long have ceased their mirth;
There's nothing stirring in the house
Save one wee, hungry, nibbling mouse;
Then why so busy thou?

Nay! start not at that sparkling light;
'Tis but the moon that shines so bright
On the window-pane bedropped with rain:
There, little darling! sleep again,
And wake when it is day!

Dorothy Wordsworth [1804–1847]

TROT, TROT!

Every evening Baby goes
Trot, trot, to town,
Across the river, through the fields,
Up hill and down.

Trot, trot, the Baby goes,
Up hill and down,
To buy a feather for her hat,
To buy a woolen gown.

Trot, trot, the Baby goes;
The birds fly down, alack!
"You cannot have our feathers, dear,"
They say, "so please trot back."

Trot, trot, the Baby goes;
The lambs come bleating near.
"You cannot have our wool," they say,
"But we are sorry, dear."

Trot, trot, the Baby goes,
Trot, trot, to town;
She buys a red rose for her hat,
She buys a cotton gown.

Mary F. Butts [1836–1902]

HOLY INNOCENTS

Sleep, little Baby, sleep;
The holy Angels love thee,
And guard thy bed, and keep
A blessed watch above thee.
No spirit can come near
Nor evil beast to harm thee:
Sleep, Sweet, devoid of fear
Where nothing need alarm thee.

The Love which doth not sleep,
The eternal Arms surround thee:
The Shepherd of the sheep
In perfect love hath found thee.
Sleep through the holy night,
Christ-kept from snare and sorrow,
Until thou wake to light
And love and warmth to-morrow.

Christina Georgina Rossetti [1830-1894]

LULLABY

From "The Mistress of the Manse"

Rockaby, lullaby, bees in the clover!
Crooning so drowsily, crying so low,
Rockaby, lullaby, dear little rover!
Down into wonderland,
Down to the under-land
Go, oh go!
Down into wonderland go!

Rockaby, lullaby, rain on the clover!
(Tears on the eyelids that waver and weep!)
Rockaby, lullaby – bending it over!
Down on the mother-world,
Down on the other world,
Sleep, oh sleep!
Down on the mother-world sleep!

Rockaby, lullaby, dew on the clover!
Dew on the eyes that will sparkle at dawn!
Rockaby, lullaby, dear little rover!
Into the stilly world,
Into the lily world,
Gone! oh gone!
Into the lily world gone!

Josiah Gilbert Holland [1819–1881]

CRADLE SONG

From "Bitter-Sweet"

What is the little one thinking about?
Very wonderful things, no doubt!
Unwritten history!
Unfathomed mystery!
Yet he laughs and cries, and eats and drinks,
And chuckles and crows, and nods and winks,
As if his head were as full of kinks
And curious riddles as any sphinx!
Warped by colic, and wet by tears,
Punctured by pins, and tortured by fears,
Our little nephew will lose two years;
And he'll never know
Where the summers go; –
He need not laugh, for he'll find it so!

Who can tell what a baby thinks?
Who can follow the gossamer links
By which the mannikin feels his way
Out from the shore of the great unknown,
Blind, and wailing, and alone,
Into the light of day? –
Out from the shore of the unknown sea,
Tossing in pitiful agony; –
Of the unknown sea that reels and rolls,
Specked with the barks of little souls, –
Barks that were launched on the other side,
And slipped from Heaven on an ebbing tide!
What does he think of his mother's eyes?
What does he think of his mother's hair?
What of the cradle-roof, that flies
Forward and backward through the air?
What does he think of his mother's breast,
Bare and beautiful, smooth and white,
Seeking it ever with fresh delight, –
Cup of his life, and couch of his rest?
What does he think when her quick embrace
Presses his hand and buries his face
Deep where the heart-throbs sink and swell
With a tenderness she can never tell,
Though she murmur the words
Of all the birds, –
Words she has learned to murmur well?
Now he thinks he'll go to sleep!
I can see the shadow creep
Over his eyes, in soft eclipse,

Over his brow, and over his lips,
Out to his little finger-tips!
Softly sinking, down he goes!
Down he goes! down he goes!
See! he is hushed in sweet repose!

Josiah Gilbert Holland [1819–1881]

AN IRISH LULLABY

I've found my bonny babe a nest
On Slumber Tree,
I'll rock you there to rosy rest,
Asthore Machree!
Oh, lulla lo! sing all the leaves
On Slumber Tree,
Till everything that hurts or grieves
Afar must flee.

I've put my pretty child to float
Away from me,
Within the new moon's silver boat
On Slumber Sea.
And when your starry sail is o'er
From Slumber Sea,
My precious one, you'll step to shore
On Mother's knee.

Alfred Perceval Graves [1846–1931]

CRADLE SONG

I

Lord Gabriel, wilt thou not rejoice
When at last a little boy's
Cheek lies heavy as a rose,
And his eyelids close?

Gabriel, when that hush may be,
This sweet hand all heedfully
I'll undo, for thee alone,
From his mother's own.

Then the far blue highways paven
With the burning stars of heaven,
He shall gladden with the sweet
Hasting of his feet –

Feet so brightly bare and cool,
Leaping, as from pool to pool;
From a little laughing boy
Splashing rainbow joy!

Gabriel, wilt thou understand
How to keep his hovering hand –
Never shut, as in a bond,
From the bright beyond? –

Nay, but though it cling and close
Tightly as a climbing rose,
Clasp it only so – aright,
Lest his heart take fright.

(Dormi, dormi tu:
The dusk is hung with blue.)

II

Lord Michael, wilt not thou rejoice
When at last a little boy's
Heart, a shut-in murmuring bee,
Turns him unto thee?

Wilt thou heed thine armor well –
To take his hand from Gabriel,
So his radiant cup of dream
May not spill a gleam?

He will take thy heart in thrall,
Telling o'er thy breastplate, all
Colors, in his bubbling speech,
With his hand to each.

(Dormi, dormi tu.
Sapphire is the blue:
Pearl and beryl, they are called,
Chrysoprase and emerald,
Sard and amethyst.
Numbered so, and kissed.)

Ah, but find some angel word
For thy sharp, subduing sword!
Yea, Lord Michael, make no doubt
He will find it out:

(Dormi, dormi tu!
His eyes will look at you.)

III

Last, a little morning space,
Lead him to that leafy place
Where Our Lady sits awake,
For all mothers' sake.

Bosomed with the Blessed One,
He shall mind her of her Son,
Once so folded from all harms,
In her shrining arms.

(In her veil of blue,
Dormi, dormi tu.)

So; – and fare thee well.
Softly, – Gabriel . . .
When the first faint red shall come,
Bid the Day–star lead him home,
For the bright world's sake –
To my heart, awake.

Josephine Preston Peabody [1874–1922]

MOTHER–SONG FROM "PRINCE LUCIFER"

White little hands!
Pink little feet!
Dimpled all over,
Sweet, sweet, sweet!
What dost thou wail for?
The unknown? the unseen?
The ills that are coming,
The joys that have been?

Cling to me closer,
Closer and closer,
Till the pain that is purer
Hath banished the grosser.
Drain, drain at the stream, love,
Thy hunger is freeing,
That was born in a dream, love,
Along with thy being!

Little fingers that feel
For their home on my breast,
Little lips that appeal
For their nurture, their rest!
Why, why dost thou weep, dear?
Nay, stifle thy cries,
Till the dew of thy sleep, dear,
Lies soft on thine eyes.

Alfred Austin [1835–1913]

KENTUCKY BABE

'Skeeters am a hummin' on de honeysuckle vine, –
Sleep, Kentucky Babe!
Sandman am a comin' to dis little coon of mine, –
Sleep, Kentucky Babe!
Silv'ry moon am shinin' in de heabens up above,
Bobolink am pinin' fo' his little lady love:
Yo' is mighty lucky,
Babe of old Kentucky, –
Close yo' eyes in sleep.

Fly away,
Fly away, Kentucky Babe, fly away to rest,
Fly away,
Lay yo' kinky, woolly head on yo' mammy's breast, –
Um – Um –,
Close yo' eyes in sleep.

Daddy's in de cane-brake wid his little dog and gun, –
Sleep, Kentucky Babe!
'Possum fo' yo' breakfast when yo' sleepin' time is done, –
Sleep, Kentucky Babe!
Bogie man'll catch yo' sure unless yo' close yo' eyes,
Waitin' jes outside de doo' to take yo' by surprise:
Bes' be keepin' shady,
Little colored lady, –
Close yo' eyes in sleep.

Richard Henry Buck [1869–

MINNIE AND WINNIE

Minnie and Winnie slept in a shell.
Sleep, little ladies! And they slept well.

Pink was the shell within, silver without;
Sounds of the great sea wandered about.

Sleep, little ladies! Wake not soon!
Echo on echo dies to the moon.

Two bright stars peeped into the shell.
"What are they dreaming of? Who can tell?"

Started a green linnet out of the croft;
Wake, little ladies! The sun is aloft.

Alfred Tennyson [1809–1892]

BED-TIME SONG

Sleep, my baby, while I sing
Bed-time news of everything.
Chickens run to mother hen;
Piggy curls up in the pen.
In the field, all tired with play,
Quiet now the lambkins stay.
Kittens cuddle in a heap –
Baby, too, must go to sleep!

Sleep, my baby, while I sing
Bed-time news of everything.
Now the cows from pasture come;
Bees fly home with drowsy hum.
Little birds are in the nest,
Under mother-bird's soft breast.
Over all soft shadows creep –
Baby now must go to sleep.

Sleep, my baby, while I sing
Bed-time news of everything.
Sleepy flowers seem to nod,
Drooping toward the dewy sod;
While the big sun's fading light
Bids my baby dear good-night.
Mother loving watch will keep;
Baby now must go to sleep.

Emilie Poulsson [1853–

TUCKING THE BABY IN

The dark-fringed eyelids slowly close
On eyes serene and deep;
Upon my breast my own sweet child
Has gently dropped to sleep;
I kiss his soft and dimpled cheek,
I kiss his rounded chin,
Then lay him on his little bed,
And tuck my baby in.

How fair and innocent he lies;
Like some small angel strayed,
His face still warmed by God's own smile,
That slumbers unafraid;
Or like some new embodied soul,
Still pure from taint of sin –
My thoughts are reverent as I stoop
To tuck my baby in.

What toil must stain these tiny hands
That now lie still and white?
What shadows creep across the face
That shines with morning light?
These wee pink shoeless feet – how far
Shall go their lengthening tread,
When they no longer cuddled close
May rest upon this bed?

O what am I that I should train
An angel for the skies;
Or mix the potent draught that feeds
The soul within these eyes?
I reach him up to the sinless Hands
Before his cares begin, –
Great Father, with Thy folds of love,
O tuck my baby in.

Curtis May [18 –

"JENNY WI' THE AIRN TEETH"

What a plague is this o' mine,
Winna steek an e'e;
Though I hap him o'er the heid,
As cosy as can be.
Sleep an' let me to my wark –
A' thae claes to airn –
Jenny wi' the airn teeth,
Come an' tak' the bairn!

Tak' him to your ain den,
Whaur the bogie bides,
But first put baith your big teeth
In his wee plump sides;
Gie your auld gray pow a shake,
Rive him frae my grup,
Tak' him whaur nae kiss is gaun
When he waukens up.

Whatna noise is that I hear
Coomin' doon the street?
Weel I ken the dump, dump,
O' her beetle feet;
Mercy me! she's at the door!
Hear her lift the sneck;
Wheesht, an' cuddle mammy noo,
Closer roun' the neck.

Jenny wi' the airn teeth,
The bairn has aff his claes;
Sleepin' safe an' soun', I think –
Dinna touch his taes.

Sleepin' bairns are no for you,
Ye may turn aboot,
An' tak' awa' wee Tam next door –
I hear him screichin' oot.

Dump, dump, awa' she gangs
Back the road she cam',
I hear her at the ither door,
Speirin' after Tam;
He's a crabbit, greetin' thing –
The warst in a' the toon,
Little like my ain wee wean –
Losh, he's sleepin' soun'!

Mithers hae an awfu' wark
Wi' their bairns at nicht,
Chappin' on the chair wi' tangs,
To gie the rogues a fricht;
Aulder bairns are fleyed wi' less,
Weel eneuch we ken,
Bigger bogies, bigger Jennies,
Frichten muckle men.

Alexander Anderson [1845–1909]

CUDDLE DOON

The bairnies cuddle doon at nicht
Wi' muckie faucht an' din,
"O, try an' sleep, ye waukrife rogues,
Your father's comin' in."
They never heed a word I speak;
I try to gie a froom,
But aye I hap them up, an' cry,
"O bairnies, cuddle doon."

Wee Jamie wi' the curly heid –
He aye sleeps next the wa' –
Bangs up an' cries, "I want a piece;"
The rascal starts them a'.
I rin an' fetch them pieces, drinks,
They stop awee the soun';
Then draw the blankets up an' cry,
"Noo, weanies, cuddle doon."

But ere five minutes gang, wee Rab
Cries oot, frae 'neath the claes,
"Mither, mak' Tam gie ower at once –
He's kittlin' wi' his taes."
The mischief's in that Tam for tricks,
He'd bother half the toon;
But aye I hap them up an' cry,
"O bairnies, cuddle doon."

At length they hear their father's fit,
An', as he steeks the door,
They turn their faces to the wa',
While Tam pretends to snore.
"Hae a' the weans been gude?" he asks,
As he pits aff his shoon;
"The bairnies, John, are in their beds,
An' lang since cuddled doon."

An' just afore we bed oorsel's,
We look at oor wee lambs;
Tam has his airm roun' wee Rab's neck,
An' Rab his airm roun' Tam's.
I lift wee Jamie up the bed,
An' as I straik each croon,
I whisper, till my heart fills up,
"O bairnies, cuddle doon."

The bairnies cuddle doon at nicht

Wi' mirth that's dear to me;
But sune the big warl's cark an' care
Will quaten doon their glee.
Yet, come what will to ilka ane,
May He who sits aboon
Aye whisper, though their pows be bauld,
"O bairnies, cuddle doon."

Alexander Anderson [1845–1909]

BEDTIME

'Tis bedtime; say your hymn, and bid "Good-night;
God bless Mamma, Papa, and dear ones all."
Your half-shut eyes beneath your eyelids fall,
Another minute, you will shut them quite.
Yes, I will carry you, put out the light,
And tuck you up, although you are so tall!
What will you give me, sleepy one, and call
My wages, if I settle you all right?

I laid her golden curls upon my arm,
I drew her little feet within my hand,
Her rosy palms were joined in trustful bliss,
Her heart next mine beat gently, soft and warm
She nestled to me, and, by Love's command,
Paid me my precious wages – "Baby's Kiss."

Francis Robert St. Clair Erskine [1833–1890]

The Home Book of Verse, V1

THE DUTY OF CHILDREN

HAPPY THOUGHT

The world is so full of a number of things,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

Robert Louis Stevenson [1850–1894]

WHOLE DUTY OF CHILDREN

A child should always say what's true
And speak when he is spoken to,
And behave mannerly at table;
At least as far as he is able.

Robert Louis Stevenson [1850–1894]

POLITENESS

Good little boys should never say
"I will," and "Give me these";
O, no! that never is the way,
But "Mother, if you please."

And "If you please," to Sister Ann
Good boys to say are ready;
And, "Yes, sir," to a Gentleman,
And, "Yes, ma'am," to a Lady.

Elizabeth Turner [? –1846]

RULES OF BEHAVIOR

Hearts, like doors, will ope with ease
To very, very little keys,
And don't forget that two of these
Are "I thank you" and "If you please."

Come when you're called,
Do what you're bid,
Close the door after you,
Never be chid.

Seldom "can't,"
Seldom "don't;"
Never "shan't,"
Never "won't."

LITTLE FRED

When little Fred
Was called to bed,
He always acted right;
He kissed Mama,
And then Papa,
And wished them all good-night.

He made no noise,
Like naughty boys,
But gently up the stairs
Directly went,
When he was sent,
And always said his prayers.

THE LOVABLE CHILD

Frisky as a lambkin,
Busy as a bee –
That's the kind of little girl
People like to see.

Modest as a violet,
As a rosebud sweet –
That's the kind of little girl
People like to meet.

Bright as is a diamond,
Pure as any pearl –
Everyone rejoices in
Such a little girl.

Happy as a robin,
Gentle as a dove –
That's the kind of little girl
Everyone will love.

Fly away and seek her,
Little song of mine,
For I choose that very girl
As my Valentine.

Emilie Poulsson [1853–

GOOD AND BAD CHILDREN

Children, you are very little,
And your bones are very brittle;
If you would grow great and stately,
You must try to walk sedately.

You must still be bright and quiet,
And content with simple diet;
And remain, through all bewild'ring,
Innocent and honest children.

Happy hearts and happy faces,
Happy play in grassy places –
That was how, in ancient ages,
Children grew to kings and sages.

But the unkind and the unruly,
And the sort who eat unduly,
They must never hope for glory –
Theirs is quite a different story!

Cruel children, crying babies,
All grow up as geese and gabies,
Hated, as their age increases,
By their nephews and their nieces.

Robert Louis Stevenson [1850–1894]

REBECCA'S AFTER-THOUGHT

Yesterday, Rebecca Mason,
In the parlor by herself,
Broke a handsome china basin,
Placed upon the mantel-shelf.

Quite alarmed, she thought of going
Very quietly away,
Not a single person knowing,
Of her being there that day.

But Rebecca recollected
She was taught deceit to shun;
And the moment she reflected,
Told her mother what was done;

Who commended her behavior,
Loved her better, and forgave her.

Elizabeth Turner [? -1846]

KINDNESS TO ANIMALS

Little children, never give
Pain to things that feel and live;
Let the gentle robin come
For the crumbs you save at home, –
As his meat you throw along
He'll repay you with a song;
Never hurt the timid hare
Peeping from her green grass lair,
Let her come and sport and play
On the lawn at close of day;
The little lark goes soaring high
To the bright windows of the sky,
Singing as if 'twere always spring,
And fluttering on an untired wing, –
Oh! let him sing his happy song,
Nor do these gentle creatures wrong.

A RULE FOR BIRDS' NESTERS

The robin and the red-breast,
The sparrow and the wren;
If ye take out o' their nest,
Ye'll never thrive again!

The robin and the red-breast,
The martin and the swallow;
If ye touch one o' their eggs,
Bad luck will surely follow!

"SING ON, BLITHE BIRD"

I've plucked the berry from the bush, the brown nut from the tree,
But heart of happy little bird ne'er broken was by me.
I saw them in their curious nests, close couching, slyly peer
With their wild eyes, like glittering beads, to note if harm were near;
I passed them by, and blessed them all; I felt that it was good
To leave unmoved the creatures small whose home was in the wood.

And here, even now, above my head, a lusty rogue doth sing;
He pecks his swelling breast and neck, and trims his little wing.
He will not fly; he knows full well, while chirping on that spray,
I would not harm him for the world, or interrupt his lay.
Sing on, sing on, blithe bird! and fill my heart with summer gladness;
It has been aching many a day with measures full of sadness!

William Motherwell [1797–1835]

"I LIKE LITTLE PUSSY"

I like little Pussy, her coat is so warm;
And if I don't hurt her she'll do me no harm.
So I'll not pull her tail, nor drive her away,
But Pussy and I very gently will play.

She shall sit by my side, and I'll give her some food;
And she'll love me because I am gentle and good.
I'll pat little Pussy and then she will purr,
And thus show her thanks for my kindness to her.

I'll not pinch her ears, nor tread on her paw,
Lest I should provoke her to use her sharp claw;
I never will vex her, nor make her displeased,
For Pussy can't bear to be worried or teased.

Jane Taylor [1783–1824]

LITTLE THINGS

Little drops of water,
Little grains of sand,
Make the mighty ocean
And the pleasant land.

So the little moments,
Humble though they be,
Make the mighty ages
Of eternity.

So our little errors
Lead the soul away
From the path of virtue,
Far in sin to stray.

Little deeds of kindness,
Little words of love,
Help to make earth happy
Like the heaven above.

Julia Fletcher Carney [1823–1908]

THE LITTLE GENTLEMAN

From "Little Derwent's Breakfast"

Take your meals, my little man,
Always like a gentleman;
Wash your face and hands with care,
Change your shoes, and brush your hair;
Then so fresh, and clean, and neat,
Come and take your proper seat:
Do not loiter and be late,
Making other people wait;
Do not rudely point or touch:
Do not eat and drink too much:
Finish what you have, before
You even ask, or send for more:
Never crumble or destroy
Food that others might enjoy;
They who idly crumbs will waste
Often want a loaf to taste!
Never spill your milk or tea,
Never rude or noisy be;
Never choose the daintiest food,
Be content with what is good:
Seek in all things that you can
To be a little gentleman.

THE CRUST OF BREAD

I must not throw upon the floor
The crust I cannot eat;
For many little hungry ones
Would think it quite a treat.

My parents labor very hard
To get me wholesome food;
Then I must never waste a bit
That would do others good.

For wilful waste makes woeful want,
And I may live to say,
Oh! how I wish I had the bread
That once I threw away!

"HOW DOTHTHE LITTLE BUSY BEE"

How doth the little busy bee
Improve each shining hour,
And gather honey all the day
From every opening flower!

How skilfully she builds her cell!
How neat she spreads the wax!
And labors hard to store it well
With the sweet food she makes.

In works of labor or of skill,
I would be busy too;
For Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.

In books, or work, or healthful play,
Let my first years be passed,
That I may give for every day
Some good account at last.

Isaac Watts [1674–1748]

THE BROWN THRUSH

There's a merry brown thrush sitting up in the tree.
"He's singing to me! He's singing to me!"
And what does he say, little girl, little boy?
"Oh, the world's running over with joy!
Don't you hear? Don't you see?
Hush! Look! In my tree,
I'm as happy as happy can be!"

And the brown thrush keeps singing, "A nest do you see,
And five eggs, hid by me in the juniper-tree?
Don't meddle! Don't touch! little girl, little boy,
Or the world will lose some of its joy!
Now I'm glad! Now I'm free!
And I always shall be,
If you never bring sorrow to me."

So the merry brown thrush sings away in the tree,
To you and to me, to you and to me;
And he sings all the day, little girl, little boy,
"Oh, the world's running over with joy!
But long it won't be,
Don't you know? Don't you see?
Unless we're as good as can be."

Lucy Larcom [1824–1893]

THE SLUGGARD

'Tis the voice of a sluggard; I heard him complain,
"You have waked me too soon; I must slumber again";
As the door on its hinges, so he on his bed
Turns his sides, and his shoulders, and his heavy head.

"A little more sleep, and a little more slumber";
Thus he wastes half his days, and his hours without number;
And when he gets up, he sits folding his hands
Or walks about saunt'ring, or trifling he stands.

I passed by his garden, and saw the wild brier
The thorn and the thistle grow broader and higher;
The clothes that hang on him are turning to rags;
And his money still wastes till he starves or he begs.

I made him a visit, still hoping to find
That he took better care for improving his mind;
He told me his dreams, talked of eating and drinking.
But he scarce reads his Bible, and never loves thinking.

Said I then to my heart, "Here's a lesson for me;
That man's but a picture of what I might be;
But thanks to my friends for their care in my breeding,
Who taught me betimes to love working and reading."

Isaac Watts [1674–1748]

THE VIOLET

Down in a green and shady bed
A modest violet grew;
Its stalk was bent, it hung its head,
As if to hide from view.

And yet it was a lovely flower,
Its colors bright and fair;
It might have graced a rosy bower,
Instead of hiding there.

Yet there it was content to bloom,
In modest tints arrayed;
And there diffused a sweet perfume,
Within the silent shade.

Then let me to the valley go,
This pretty flower to see;
That I may also learn to grow
In sweet humility.

Jane Taylor [1783–1824]

DIRTY JIM

There was one little Jim,
'Tis reported of him,
And must be to his lasting disgrace,
That he never was seen
With hands at all clean,
Nor yet ever clean was his face.

His friends were much hurt
To see so much dirt,
And often they made him quite clean;
But all was in vain,
He got dirty again,
And not at all fit to be seen.

It gave him no pain
To hear them complain,
Nor his own dirty clothes to survey;
His indolent mind
No pleasure could find
In tidy and wholesome array.

The idle and bad,
Like this little lad,
May love dirty ways, to be sure;
But good boys are seen,
To be decent and clean,
Although they are ever so poor.

Jane Taylor [1783–1824]

THE PIN

"Dear me! what signifies a pin,
Wedged in a rotten board?
I'm certain that I won't begin,
At ten years old, to hoard;
I never will be called a miser,
That I'm determined," said Eliza.

So onward tripped the little maid,
And left the pin behind,
Which very snug and quiet lay,
To its hard fate resigned;
Nor did she think (a careless chit)
'Twas worth her while to stoop for it.

Next day a party was to ride,
To see an air balloon;
And all the company beside
Were dressed and ready soon;
But she a woeful case was in,
For want of just a single pin.

In vain her eager eyes she brings,
To every darksome crack;
There was not one, and yet her things
Were dropping off her back.
She cut her pincushion in two,
But no, not one had fallen through.

At last, as hunting on the floor,
Over a crack she lay,
The carriage rattled to the door,
Then rattled fast away;
But poor Eliza was not in,
For want of just – a single pin!

There's hardly anything so small,
So trifling or so mean,
That we may never want at all,
For service unforeseen;
And wilful waste, depend upon't,
Brings, almost always, woeful want!

Ann Taylor [1782–1866]

JANE AND ELIZA

There were two little girls, neither handsome nor plain,
One's name was Eliza, the other's was Jane;
They were both of one height, as I've heard people say,
And both of one age, I believe, to a day.

'Twas fancied by some, who but slightly had seen them,
There was not a pin to be chosen between them;
But no one for long in this notion persisted,
So great a distinction there really existed.

Eliza knew well that she could not be pleasing,
While fretting and fuming, while sulking or teasing;
And therefore in company artfully tried,
Not to break her bad habits, but only to hide.

So, when she was out, with much labor and pain,
She contrived to look almost as pleasant as Jane;
But then you might see that, in forcing a smile,
Her mouth was uneasy, and ached all the while.

And in spite of her care it would sometimes befall
That some cross event happened to ruin it all;
And because it might chance that her share was the worst,
Her temper broke loose, and her dimples dispersed.

But Jane, who had nothing she wanted to hide,
And therefore these troublesome arts never tried,
Had none of the care and fatigue of concealing,
But her face always showed what her bosom was feeling.

At home or abroad there was peace in her smile,
A cheerful good nature that needed no guile.
And Eliza worked hard, but could never obtain

The affection that freely was given to Jane.

Ann Taylor [1782–1866]

MEDDLESOME MATTY

One ugly trick has often spoiled
The sweetest and the best;
Matilda, though a pleasant child,
One ugly trick possessed,
Which, like a cloud before the skies,
Hid all her better qualities.

Sometimes she'd lift the tea-pot lid,
To peep at what was in it;
Or tilt the kettle, if you did
But turn your back a minute.
In vain you told her not to touch,
Her trick of meddling grew so much.

Her grandmamma went out one day,
And by mistake she laid
Her spectacles and snuff-box gay
Too near the little maid;
"Ah! well," thought she, "I'll try them on,
As soon as grandmamma is gone."

Forthwith she placed upon her nose
The glasses large and wide;
And looking round, as I suppose,
The snuff-box too she spied:
"Oh! what a pretty box is that;
I'll open it," said little Matt.

"I know that grandmamma would say,
'Don't meddle with it, dear';
But then, she's far enough away,
And no one else is near:
Besides, what can there be amiss
In opening such a box as this?"

So thumb and finger went to work
To move the stubborn lid,
And presently a mighty jerk
The mighty mischief did;
For all at once, ah! woeful case,
The snuff came puffing in her face.

Poor eyes, and nose, and mouth, beside,
A dismal sight presented;
In vain, as bitterly she cried,
Her folly she repented.

In vain she ran about for ease;
She could do nothing now but sneeze.

She dashed the spectacles away,
To wipe her tingling eyes,
And as in twenty bits they lay,
Her grandmamma she spies.
"Heydey! and what's the matter now?"
Cried grandmamma, with lifted brow.

Matilda, smarting with the pain,
And tingling still, and sore,
Made many a promise to refrain
From meddling evermore.
And 'tis a fact, as I have heard,
She ever since has kept her word.

Ann Taylor [1782–1866]

CONTENTED JOHN

One honest John Tomkins, a hedger and ditcher,
Although he was poor, did not want to be richer;
For all such vain wishes in him were prevented
By a fortunate habit of being contented.

Though cold were the weather, or dear were the food,
John never was found in a murmuring mood;
For this he was constantly heard to declare, –
What he could not prevent he would cheerfully bear.

"For why should I grumble and murmur?" he said;
"If I cannot get meat, I'll be thankful for bread;
And, though fretting may make my calamities deeper,
It can never cause bread and cheese to be cheaper."

If John was afflicted with sickness or pain,
He wished himself better, but did not complain,
Nor lie down to fret in despondence and sorrow,
But said that he hoped to be better to-morrow.

If any one wronged him or treated him ill,
Why, John was good-natured and sociable still;
For he said that revenging the injury done
Would be making two rogues when there need be but one.

And thus honest John, though his station was humble,
Passed through this sad world without even a grumble;
And I wish that some folks, who are greater and richer,
Would copy John Tomkins, the hedger and ditcher.

Jane Taylor [1783–1824]

FRIENDS

How good to lie a little while
And look up through the tree!
The Sky is like a kind big smile
Bent sweetly over me.

The Sunshine flickers through the lace
Of leaves above my head,
And kisses me upon the face
Like Mother, before bed.

The Wind comes stealing o'er the grass
To whisper pretty things;
And though I cannot see him pass,
I feel his careful wings.

So many gentle Friends are near
Whom one can scarcely see,
A child should never feel a fear,
Wherever he may be.

Abbie Farwell Brown [1875–1927]

ANGER

Anger in its time and place
May assume a kind of grace.
It must have some reason in it,
And not last beyond a minute.
If to further lengths it go,
It does into malice grow.
'Tis the difference that we see
'Twixt the serpent and the bee.
If the latter you provoke,
It inflicts a hasty stroke,
Puts you to some little pain,
But it never stings again.
Close in tufted bush or brake
Lurks the poison-swelled snake
Nursing up his cherished wrath;
In the purlieus of his path,
In the cold, or in the warm,
Mean him good, or mean him harm,
Wheresoever fate may bring you,
The vile snake will always sting you.

Charles and Mary Lamb

"THERE WAS A LITTLE GIRL"

There was a little girl, who had a little curl
Right in the middle of her forehead,
And when she was good she was very, very good,
But when she was bad she was horrid.

She stood on her head, on her little trundle-bed,
With nobody by for to hinder;
She screamed and she squalled, she yelled and she bawled,
And drummed her little heels against the winder.

Her mother heard the noise, and thought it was the boys
Playing in the empty attic,
She rushed upstairs, and caught her unawares,
And spanked her, most emphatic.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow [1807–1882]

THE REFORMATION OF GODFREY GORE

Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore –
No doubt you have heard the name before –
Was a boy who never would shut a door!

The wind might whistle, the wind might roar,
And teeth be aching and throats be sore,
But still he never would shut the door.

His father would beg, his mother implore,
"Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore,
We really do wish you would shut the door!"

Their hands they wrung, their hair they tore;
But Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore
Was deaf as the buoy out at the Nore.

When he walked forth the folks would roar,
"Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore,
Why don't you think to shut the door?"

They rigged out a Shutter with sail and oar,
And threatened to pack off Gustavus Gore
On a voyage of penance to Singapore.

But he begged for mercy, and said, "No more!
Pray do not send me to Singapore
On a Shutter, and then I will shut the door!"

"You will?" said his parents; "then keep on shore!
But mind you do! For the plague is sore
Of a fellow that never will shut the door,
Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore!"

William Brighty Rands [1823–1882]

THE BEST FIRM

A pretty good firm is "Watch Waite,"
And another is "Attit, Early Layte;"
And still another is "Doo Dairet;"
But the best is probably "Grinn Barrett."

Walter G. Doty [1876–

A LITTLE PAGE'S SONG

(13th Century)

God's lark at morning I would be!
I'd set my heart within a tree
Close to His bed and sing to Him
Right merrily
A sunrise hymn.

At night I'd be God's troubadour!
Beneath His starry walls I'd pour
Across the moat such roundelays
He'd love me sure –
And maybe praise!

William Alexander Percy [1885–

HOW THE LITTLE KITE LEARNED TO FLY

"I never can do it," the little kite said,
As he looked at the others high over his head;
"I know I should fall if I tried to fly."
"Try," said the big kite; "only try!
Or I fear you never will learn at all."
But the little kite said, "I'm afraid I'll fall."

The big kite nodded: "Ah well, goodbye;
I'm off;" and he rose toward the tranquil sky.
Then the little kite's paper stirred at the sight,
And trembling he shook himself free for flight.
First whirling and frightened, then braver grown,
Up, up he rose through the air alone,
Till the big kite looking down could see
The little one rising steadily.

Then how the little kite thrilled with pride,
As he sailed with the big kite side by side!
While far below he could see the ground,
And the boys like small spots moving round.
They rested high in the quiet air,
And only the birds and the clouds were there.
"Oh, how happy I am!" the little kite cried,
"And all because I was brave, and tried."

Unknown

THE BUTTERFLY AND THE BEE

Methought I heard a butterfly
Say to a laboring bee;
"Thou hast no colors of the sky
On painted wings like me."

"Poor child of vanity! those dyes,
And colors bright and rare,"
With mild reproof, the bee replies,
"Are all beneath my care."

"Content I toil from morn till eve,
And, scorning idleness,
To tribes of gaudy sloth I leave
The vanity of dress."

William Lisle Bowles [1762–1850]

THE BUTTERFLY

The butterfly, an idle thing,
Nor honey makes, nor yet can sing,
As do the bee and bird;
Nor does it, like the prudent ant,
Lay up the grain for times of want,
A wise and cautious hoard.

My youth is but a summer's day:
Then like the bee and ant I'll lay
A store of learning by;
And though from flower to flower I rove,
My stock of wisdom I'll improve,
Nor be a butterfly.

Adelaide O'Keefe [1776–1855]

MORNING

The lark is up to meet the sun,
The bee is on the wing,
The ant her labor has begun,
The woods with music ring.

Shall birds and bees and ants be wise,
While I my moments waste?
Oh, let me with the morning rise,
And to my duties haste.

Why should I sleep till beams of morn
Their light and glory shed?
Immortal beings were not born
To waste their time in bed.

Jane Taylor [1783–1824]

BUTTERCUPS AND DAISIES

Buttercups and daisies,
Oh, the pretty flowers;
Coming ere the spring time,
To tell of sunny hours,
While the trees are leafless,
While the fields are bare,
Buttercups and daisies
Spring up here and there.

Ere the snow-drop peepeth,
Ere the crocus bold,
Ere the early primrose
Opes its paly gold, –
Somewhere on the sunny bank
Buttercups are bright;
Somewhere midst the frozen grass
Peeps the daisy white.

Little hardy flowers,
Like to children poor,
Playing in their sturdy health
By their mother's door.
Purple with the north-wind,
Yet alert and bold;
Fearing not, and caring not,
Though they be a-cold!

What to them is winter!
What are stormy showers!
Buttercups and daisies
Are these human flowers!
He who gave them hardships
And a life of care,
Gave them likewise hardy strength
And patient hearts to bear.

Mary Howitt [1799–1888]

THE ANT AND THE CRICKET

A silly young cricket, accustomed to sing
Through the warm, sunny months of gay summer and spring,
Began to complain, when he found that at home
His cupboard was empty and winter was come.
Not a crumb to be found
On the snow-covered ground;
Not a flower could he see,
Not a leaf on a tree:
"Oh, what will become," says the cricket, "of me?"

At last by starvation and famine made bold,
All dripping with wet and all trembling with cold,
Away he set off to a miserly ant,
To see if, to keep him alive, he would grant
Him shelter from rain:
A mouthful of grain
He wished only to borrow,
He'd repay it to-morrow:
If not, he must die of starvation and sorrow.

Says the ant to the cricket, "I'm your servant and friend,
But we ants never borrow, we ants never lend;
But tell me, dear sir, did you lay nothing by
When the weather was warm?" Said the cricket, "Not I.
My heart was so light
That I sang day and night,
For all nature looked gay."
"You sang, sir, you say?"
Go then," said the ant, "and dance winter away."
Thus ending, he hastily lifted the wicket
And out of the door turned the poor little cricket.
Though this is a fable, the moral is good:
If you live without work, you must live without food.

Unknown

AFTER WINGS

This was your butterfly, you see, –
His fine wings made him vain:
The caterpillars crawl, but he
Passed them in rich disdain. –
My pretty boy says, "Let him be
Only a worm again!"

O child, when things have learned to wear
Wings once, they must be fain
To keep them always high and fair:
Think of the creeping pain
Which even a butterfly must bear
To be a worm again!

Sarah M. B. Piatt [1836–1919]

DEEDS OF KINDNESS

Suppose the little Cowslip
Should hang its golden cup
And say, "I'm such a little flower
I'd better not grow up!"
How many a weary traveller
Would miss its fragrant smell,
How many a little child would grieve
To lose it from the dell!

Suppose the glistening Dewdrop
Upon the grass should say,
"What can a little dewdrop do?
I'd better roll away!"
The blade on which it rested,
Before the day was done,
Without a drop to moisten it,
Would wither in the sun.

Suppose the little Breezes,
Upon a summer's day,
Should think themselves too small to cool
The traveller on his way:
Who would not miss the smallest
And softest ones that blow,
And think they made a great mistake
If they were acting so?

How many deed of kindness
A little child can do,
Although it has but little strength
And little wisdom too!
It wants a loving spirit
Much more than strength, to prove
How many things a child may do
For others by its love.

Epes Sargent [1813–1880]

THE LION AND THE MOUSE

A lion with the heat oppressed,
One day composed himself to rest:
But while he dozed as he intended,
A mouse, his royal back ascended;
Nor thought of harm, as Aesop tells,
Mistaking him for someone else;
And travelled over him, and round him,
And might have left him as she found him
Had she not – tremble when you hear –
Tried to explore the monarch's ear!
Who straightway woke, with wrath immense,
And shook his head to cast her thence.
"You rascal, what are you about?"
Said he, when he had turned her out,
"I'll teach you soon," the lion said,
"To make a mouse-hole in my head!"
So saying, he prepared his foot
To crush the trembling tiny brute;
But she (the mouse) with tearful eye,
Implored the lion's clemency,
Who thought it best at last to give
His little prisoner a reprieve.

'Twas nearly twelve months after this,
The lion chanced his way to miss;
When pressing forward, heedless yet,
He got entangled in a net.
With dreadful rage, he stamped and tore,
And straight commenced a lordly roar;
When the poor mouse, who heard the noise,
Attended, for she knew his voice.
Then what the lion's utmost strength
Could not effect, she did at length;
With patient labor she applied
Her teeth, the network to divide;
And so at last forth issued he,
A lion, by a mouse set free.

Few are so small or weak, I guess,
But may assist us in distress,
Nor shall we ever, if we're wise,
The meanest, or the least despise.

Jeffreys Taylor [1792–1853]

THE BOY AND THE WOLF

A little Boy was set to keep
A little flock of goats or sheep;
He thought the task too solitary,
And took a strange perverse vagary:
To call the people out of fun,
To see them leave their work and run,
He cried and screamed with all his might, –
"Wolf! wolf!" in a pretended fright.
Some people, working at a distance,
Came running in to his assistance.
They searched the fields and bushes round,
The Wolf was nowhere to be found.
The Boy, delighted with his game,
A few days after did the same,
And once again the people came.
The trick was many times repeated,
At last they found that they were cheated.
One day the Wolf appeared in sight,
The Boy was in a real fright,
He cried, "Wolf! wolf!" – the neighbors heard,
But not a single creature stirred.
"We need not go from our employ, –
'Tis nothing but that idle boy."
The little Boy cried out again,
"Help, help! the Wolf!" he cried in vain.
At last his master came to beat him.
He came too late, the Wolf had eat him.

This shows the bad effect of lying,
And likewise of continual crying.
If I had heard you scream and roar,
For nothing, twenty times before,
Although you might have broke your arm,
Or met with any serious harm,
Your cries could give me no alarm;
They would not make me move the faster,
Nor apprehend the least disaster;
I should be sorry when I came,
But you yourself would be to blame.

John Hookham Frere [1769–1846]

THE STORY OF AUGUSTUS, WHO WOULD NOT HAVE ANY SOUP

Augustus was a chubby lad;
Fat, ruddy cheeks Augustus had;
And everybody saw with joy
The plump and hearty, healthy boy.
He ate and drank as he was told,
And never let his soup get cold.

But one day, one cold winter's day,
He screamed out – "Take the soup away!
O take the nasty soup away!
I won't have any soup to-day."

Next day begins his tale of woes;
Quite lank and lean Augustus grows.
Yet, though he feels so weak and ill,
The naughty fellow cries out still –
"Not any soup for me, I say:
O take the nasty soup away!
I won't have any soup to-day."

The third day comes; O what a sin!
To make himself so pale and thin.
Yet, when the soup is put on table,
He screams, as loud as he is able, –
"Not any soup for me, I say:
O take the nasty soup away!
I won't have any soup to-day."

Look at him, now the fourth day's come!
He scarcely weighs a sugar-plum;
He's like a little bit of thread,
And on the fifth day, he was – dead!

From the German of Heinrich Hoffman [1798–1874]

THE STORY OF LITTLE SUCK-A-THUMB

One day, mamma said: "Conrad dear,
I must go out and leave you here.
But mind now, Conrad, what I say,
Don't suck your thumb while I'm away.
The great tall tailor always comes
To little boys that suck their thumbs;
And ere they dream what he's about,
He takes his great sharp scissors out
And cuts their thumbs clean off, – and then,
You know, they never grow again."

Mamma had scarcely turned her back,
The thumb was in, alack! alack!
The door flew open, in he ran,
The great, long, red-legged scissors–man.
Oh, children, see! the tailor's come
And caught our little Suck–a–Thumb.
Snip! snap! snip! the scissors go;
And Conrad cries out – "Oh! oh! oh!"

Snip! snap! Snip! They go so fast,
That both his thumbs are off at last.
Mamma comes home; there Conrad stands,
And looks quite sad, and shows his hands; –
"Ah!" said mamma, "I knew he'd come
To naughty little Suck–a–Thumb."

From the German of Heinrich Hoffman [1798–1874]

WRITTEN IN A LITTLE LADY'S LITTLE ALBUM

Hearts good and true
Have wishes few
In narrow circles bounded,
And hope that lives
On what God gives
Is Christian hope well founded.

Small things are best;
Grief and unrest
To rank and wealth are given;
But little things
On little wings
Bear little souls to heaven.

Frederick William Faber [1814–1863]

MY LADY WIND

My Lady Wind, my Lady Wind,
Went round about the house to find
A chink to set her foot in;
She tried the keyhole in the door,
She tried the crevice in the floor,
And drove the chimney soot in.

And then one night when it was dark
She blew up such a tiny spark
That all the town was bothered;
From it she raised such flame and smoke
That many in great terror woke,
And many more were smothered.

And thus when once, my little dears,
A whisper reaches itching ears –
The same will come, you'll find:
Take my advice, restrain the tongue,
Remember what old nurse has sung
Of busy Lady Wind.

Unknown

TO A CHILD

Small service is true service while it lasts:
Of humblest friends, bright creature! scorn not one:
The daisy, by the shadow that it casts,
Protects the lingering dewdrop from the sun.

William Wordsworth [1770–1850]

A FAREWELL

My fairest child, I have no song to give you;
No lark could pipe to skies so dull and gray:
Yet, if you will, one quiet hint I'll leave you
For every day.

I'll tell you how to sing a clearer carol
Than lark who hails the dawn on breezy down;
To earn yourself a purer poet's laurel
Than Shakespeare's crown.

Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever;
Do noble things, not dream them, all day long:
And so make Life, and Death, and that For Ever
One grand sweet song.

Charles Kingsley [1819–1875]

The Home Book of Verse, V1

RHYMES OF CHILDHOOD

REEDS OF INNOCENCE

Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he laughing said to me:

"Pipe a song about a lamb!"
So I piped with merry cheer.
"Piper, pipe that song again;"
So I piped: he wept to hear.

"Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe;
Sing thy songs of happy cheer!"
So I sang the same again,
While he wept with joy to hear.

"Piper, sit thee down and write
In a book that all may read."
So he vanished from my sight;
And I plucked a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,
And I stained the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear.

William Blake [1757–1827]

THE WONDERFUL WORLD

Great, wide, beautiful, wonderful World,
With the wonderful water round you curled,
And the wonderful grass upon your breast,
World, you are beautifully dressed.

The wonderful air is over me,
And the wonderful wind is shaking the tree –
It walks on the water, and whirls the mills,
And talks to itself on the tops of the hills.

You friendly Earth, how far do you go,
With the wheat-fields that nod and the rivers that flow,
With cities and gardens, and cliffs and isles,
And people upon you for thousands of miles?

Ah! you are so great, and I am so small,
I tremble to think of you, World, at all;
And yet, when I said my prayers to-day,
A whisper inside me seemed to say,
"You are more than the Earth, though you are such a dot:
You can love and think, and the Earth cannot!"

William Brighty Rands [1823–1882]

THE WORLD'S MUSIC

The world's a very happy place,
Where every child should dance and sing,
And always have a smiling face,
And never sulk for anything.

I waken when the morning's come,
And feel the air and light alive
With strange sweet music like the hum
Of bees about their busy hive.

The linnets play among the leaves
At hide-and-seek, and chirp and sing;
While, flashing to and from the eaves,
The swallows twitter on the wing.

The twigs that shake, and boughs that sway;
And tall old trees you could not climb;
And winds that come, but cannot stay,
Are gaily singing all the time.

From dawn to dark the old mill-wheel
Makes music, going round and round;
And dusty-white with flour and meal,
The miller whistles to its sound.

And if you listen to the rain
When leaves and birds and bees are dumb,
You hear it pattering on the pane
Like Andrew beating on his drum.

The coals beneath the kettle croon,
And clap their hands and dance in glee;
And even the kettle hums a tune
To tell you when it's time for tea.

The world is such a happy place,
That children, whether big or small,
Should always have a smiling face,
And never, never sulk at all.

Gabriel Setoun [1861–

A BOY'S SONG

Where the pools are bright and deep,
Where the gray trout lies asleep,
Up the river and over the lea,
That's the way for Billy and me.

Where the blackbird sings the latest,
Where the hawthorn blooms the sweetest,
Where the nestlings chirp and flee,
That's the way for Billy and me.

Where the mowers mow the cleanest,
Where the hay lies thick and greenest,
There to track the homeward bee,
That's the way for Billy and me.

Where the hazel bank is steepest,
Where the shadow falls the deepest,
Where the clustering nuts fall free,
That's the way for Billy and me.

Why the boys should drive away
Little sweet maidens from the play,
Or love to banter and fight so well,
That's the thing I never could tell.

But this I know, I love to play
Through the meadow, among the hay;
Up the water and over the lea,
That's the way for Billy and me.

James Hogg [1770–1835]

GOING DOWN HILL ON A BICYCLE

A Boy's Song

With lifted feet, hands still,
I am poised, and down the hill
Dart, with heedful mind;
The air goes by in a wind.

Swifter and yet more swift,
Till the heart with a mighty lift
Makes the lungs laugh, the throat cry: –
"O bird, see; see, bird, I fly.

"Is this, is this your joy?
O bird, then I, though a boy,
For a golden moment share
Your feathery life in air!"

Say, heart, is there aught like this
In a world that is full of bliss?
'Tis more than skating, bound
Steel–shod to the level ground.

Speed slackens now, I float
Awhile in my airy boat;
Till, when the wheels scarce crawl,
My feet to the treadles fall.

Alas, that the longest hill
Must end in a vale; but still,
Who climbs with toil, wheresoe'er,
Shall find wings waiting there.

Henry Charles Beeching [1859–1919]

PLAYGROUNDS

In summer I am very glad
We children are so small,
For we can see a thousand things
That men can't see at all.

They don't know much about the moss
And all the stones they pass:
They never lie and play among
The forests in the grass:

They walk about a long way off;
And, when we're at the sea,
Let father stoop as best he can
He can't find things like me.

But, when the snow is on the ground
And all the puddles freeze,
I wish that I were very tall,
High up above the trees.

Laurence Alma-Tadema [18 –

"WHO HAS SEEN THE WIND?"

Who has seen the wind?
Neither I nor you:
But when the leaves hang trembling,
The wind is passing through.

Who has seen the wind?
Neither you nor I:
But when the trees bow down their heads,
The wind is passing by.

Christina Georgina Rossetti [1830–1894]

THE WIND'S SONG

O winds that blow across the sea,
What is the story that you bring?
Leaves clap their hands on every tree
And birds about their branches sing.

You sing to flowers and trees and birds
Your sea-songs over all the land.
Could you not stay and whisper words
A little child might understand?

The roses nod to hear you sing;
But though I listen all the day,
You never tell me anything
Of father's ship so far away.

Its masts are taller than the trees;
Its sails are silver in the sun;
There's not a ship upon the seas
So beautiful as father's one.

With wings spread out it flies so fast
It leaves the waves all white with foam.
Just whisper to me, blowing past,
If you have seen it sailing home.

I feel your breath upon my cheek,
And in my hair, and on my brow.
Dear winds, if you could only speak,
I know that you would tell me now.

My father's coming home, you'd say,
With precious presents, one, two, three;
A shawl for mother, beads for May,
And eggs and shells for Rob and me.

The winds sing songs where'er they roam;
The leaves all clap their little hands;
For father's ship is coming home
With wondrous things from foreign lands.

Gabriel Setoun [1861–

THE PIPER ON THE HILL

A Child's Song

There sits a piper on the hill
Who pipes the livelong day,
And when he pipes both loud and shrill,
The frightened people say:
"The wind, the wind is blowing up
'Tis rising to a gale."
The women hurry to the shore
To watch some distant sail.
The wind, the wind, the wind, the wind,
Is blowing to a gale.

But when he pipes all sweet and low,
The piper on the hill,
I hear the merry women go
With laughter, loud and shrill:
"The wind, the wind is coming south
'Twill blow a gentle day."
They gather on the meadow-land
To toss the yellow hay.
The wind, the wind, the wind, the wind,
Is blowing south to-day.

And in the morn, when winter comes,
To keep the piper warm,
The little Angels shake their wings
To make a feather storm:
"The snow, the snow has come at last!"
The happy children call,
And "ring around" they dance in glee,
And watch the snowflakes fall.
The wind, the wind, the wind, the wind,
Has spread a snowy pall.

But when at night the piper plays,
I have not any fear,
Because God's windows open wide
The pretty tune to hear;
And when each crowding spirit looks,
From its star window-pane,
A watching mother may behold
Her little child again.
The wind, the wind, the wind, the wind,
May blow her home again.

Dora Sigerson Shorter [1862-1918]

THE WIND AND THE MOON

Said the Wind to the Moon, "I will blow you out;
You stare
In the air
Like a ghost in a chair,
Always looking what I am about –
I hate to be watched; I'll blow you out."

The Wind blew hard, and out went the Moon.
So, deep
On a heap
Of clouds to sleep,
Down lay the Wind, and slumbered soon,
Muttering low, "I've done for that Moon."

He turned in his bed; she was there again!
On high
In the sky,
With her one ghost eye,
The Moon shone white and alive and plain.
Said the Wind, "I will blow you out again."

The Wind blew hard, and the Moon grew dim.
"With my sledge,
And my wedge,
I have knocked off her edge!
If only I blow right fierce and grim,
The creature will soon be dimmer than dim."

He blew and he blew, and she thinned to a thread.
"One puff
More's enough
To blow her to snuff!
One good puff more where the last was bred,
And glimmer, glimmer, glum will go the thread."

He blew a great blast, and the thread was gone.
In the air
Nowhere
Was a moonbeam bare;
Far off and harmless the shy stars shone –
Sure and certain the Moon was gone!

The Wind he took to his revels once more;
On down,
In town,
Like a merry–mad clown,

He leaped and halloed with whistle and roar –
"What's that?" The glimmering thread once more!

He flew in a rage – he danced and blew;
But in vain
Was the pain
Of his bursting brain;
For still the broader the Moon–scrap grew,
The broader he swelled his big cheeks and blew.

Slowly she grew – till she filled the night,
And shone
On her throne
In the sky alone,
A matchless, wonderful silvery light,
Radiant and lovely, the queen of the night.

Said the Wind: "What a marvel of power am I!
With my breath,
Good faith!
I blew her to death –
First blew her away right out of the sky –
Then blew her in; what strength have I!

But the Moon she knew nothing about the affair;
For high
In the sky,
With her one white eye,
Motionless, miles above the air,
She had never heard the great Wind blare.

George Macdonald [1824–1905]

CHILD'S SONG IN SPRING

The silver birch is a dainty lady,
She wears a satin gown;
The elm tree makes the old churchyard shady,
She will not live in town.

The English oak is a sturdy fellow,
He gets his green coat late;
The willow is smart in a suit of yellow,
While brown the beech trees wait.

Such a gay green gown God gives the larches –
As green as He is good!
The hazels hold up their arms for arches
When Spring rides through the wood.

The chestnut's proud, and the lilac's pretty,
The poplar's gentle and tall,
But the plane tree's kind to the poor dull city –
I love him best of all!

Edith Nesbit [1858–1924]

BABY SEED SONG

Little brown brother, oh! little brown brother,
Are you awake in the dark?
Here we lie cosily, close to each other:
Hark to the song of the lark –
"Waken!" the lark says, "waken and dress you;
Put on your green coats and gay,
Blue sky will shine on you, sunshine caress you –
Waken! 'tis morning – 'tis May!"

Little brown brother, oh! little brown brother,
What kind of flower will you be?
I'll be a poppy – all white, like my mother;
Do be a poppy like me.
What! you're a sun-flower? How I shall miss you
When you're grown golden and high!
But I shall send all the bees up to kiss you;
Little brown brother, good-bye.

Edith Nesbit [1858–1924]

LITTLE DANDELION

Gay little Dandelion
Lights up the meads,
Swings on her slender foot,
Telleth her beads,
Lists to the robin's note
Poured from above;
Wise little Dandelion
Asks not for love.

Cold lie the daisy banks
Clothed but in green,
Where, in the days agone,
Bright hues were seen.
Wild pinks are slumbering,
Violets delay;
True little Dandelion
Greeteth the May.

Brave little Dandelion!
Fast falls the snow,
Bending the daffodil's
Haughty head low.
Under that fleecy tent,
Careless of cold,
Blithe little Dandelion
Counteth her gold.

Meek little Dandelion
Groweth more fair,
Till dies the amber dew
Out from her hair.
High rides the thirsty sun,
Fiercely and high;
Faint little Dandelion
Closeth her eye.

Pale little Dandelion,
In her white shroud,
Heareth the angel-breeze
Call from the cloud;
Tiny plumes fluttering
Make no delay;
Little winged Dandelion
Soareth away.

Helen Barron Bostwick [1826- ?]

LITTLE WHITE LILY

From "Within and Without"

Little White Lily sat by a stone,
Drooping and waiting till the sun shone.
Little White Lily sunshine has fed;
Little White Lily is lifting her head.

Little White Lily said: "It is good,
Little White Lily's clothing and food."
Little White Lily dressed like a bride!
Shining with whiteness, and crowned beside!

Little White Lily drooping with pain,
Waiting and waiting for the wet rain,
Little White Lily holdeth her cup;
Rain is fast falling and filling it up.

Little White Lily said: "Good again,
When I am thirsty to have the nice rain.
Now I am stronger, now I am cool;
Heat cannot burn me, my veins are so full."

Little White Lily smells very sweet;
On her head sunshine, rain at her feet.
Thanks to the sunshine, thanks to the rain,
Little White Lily is happy again.

George Macdonald [1824–1905]

WISHING

Ring-ting! I wish I were a Primrose,
A bright yellow Primrose, blowing in the Spring!
The stooping bough above me,
The wandering bee to love me,
The fern and moss to creep across,
And the Elm-tree for our King!

Nay, – stay! I wish I were an Elm-tree,
A great lofty Elm-tree, with green leaves gay!
The winds would set them dancing,
The sun and moonshine glance in,
The Birds would house among the boughs,
And sweetly sing!

O – no! I wish I were a Robin,
A Robin or a little Wren, everywhere to go;
Through forest, field, or garden,
And ask no leave or pardon,
Till Winter comes with icy thumbs
To ruffle up our wing.

Well – tell! Where should I fly to,
Where go to sleep in the dark wood or dell?
Before a day was over,
Home comes the rover,
For Mother's kiss, – sweeter this
Than any other thing!

William Allingham [1824–1889]

IN THE GARDEN

I spied beside the garden bed
A tiny lass of ours,
Who stopped and bent her sunny head
Above the red June flowers.

Pushing the leaves and thorns apart,
She singled out a rose,
And in its inmost crimson heart,
Enraptured, plunged her nose.

"O dear, dear rose, come, tell me true –
Come, tell me true," said she,
"If I smell just as sweet to you
As you smell sweet to me!"

Ernest Crosby [1856–1907]

THE GLADNESS OF NATURE

Is this a time to be cloudy and sad,
When our mother Nature laughs around;
When even the deep blue heavens look glad,
And gladness breathes from the blossoming ground?

There are notes of joy from the hang-bird and wren,
And the gossip of swallows through all the sky;
The ground-squirrel gaily chirps by his den,
And the wilding bee hums merrily by.

The clouds are at play in the azure space
And their shadows at play on the bright-green vale,
And here they stretch to the frolic chase,
And there they roll on the easy gale.

There's a dance of leaves in that aspen bower,
There's a titter of winds in that beechen tree,
There's a smile on the fruit, and a smile on the flower,
And a laugh from the brook that runs to the sea.

And look at the broad-faced sun, how he smiles
On the dewy earth that smiles in his ray,
On the leaping waters and gay young isles;
Ay, look, and he'll smile thy gloom away.

William Cullen Bryant [1794–1878]

GLAD DAY

Here's another day, dear,
Here's the sun again
Peeping in his pleasant way
Through the window pane.
Rise and let him in, dear,
Hail him "hip hurray!"
Now the fun will all begin.
Here's another day!

Down the coppice path, dear,
Through the dewy glade,
(When the Morning took her bath
What a splash she made!)
Up the wet wood-way, dear,
Under dripping green
Run to meet another day,
Brightest ever seen.

Mushrooms in the field, dear,
Show their silver gleam.
What a dainty crop they yield
Firm as clouted cream,
Cool as balls of snow, dear,
Sweet and fresh and round!
Ere the early dew can go
We must clear the ground.

Such a lot to do, dear,
Such a lot to see!
How we ever can get through
Fairly puzzles me.
Hurry up and out, dear,
Then – away! away!
In and out and round about,
Here's another day!

W. Graham Robertson [1867–

THE TIGER

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright,
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did He smile His work to see?
Did He who made the Lamb, make thee?

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright,
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

William Blake [1757–1827]

ANSWER TO A CHILD'S QUESTION

Do you ask what the birds say? The Sparrow, the Dove,
The Linnet and Thrush say, "I love and I love!"
In the winter they're silent – the wind is so strong;
What it says, I don't know, but it sings a loud song.
But green leaves, and blossoms, and sunny warm weather,
And singing, and loving – all come back together.
But the Lark is so brimful of gladness and love,
The green fields below him, the blue sky above,
That he sings, and he sings, and for ever sings he –
"I love my Love, and my Love loves me!"

Samuel Taylor Coleridge [1772–1834]

HOW THE LEAVES CAME DOWN

I'll tell you how the leaves came down.
The great Tree to his children said:
"You're getting sleepy, Yellow and Brown,
Yes, very sleepy, little Red.
It is quite time to go to bed."

"Ah!" begged each silly, pouting leaf,
"Let us a little longer stay;
Dear Father Tree, behold our grief!
'Tis such a very pleasant day,
We do not want to go away."

So, just for one more merry day
To the great Tree the leaflets clung,
Frolicked and danced, and had their way,
Upon the autumn breezes swung,
Whispering all their sports among –

"Perhaps the great Tree will forget,
And let us stay until the spring,
If we all beg, and coax, and fret."
But the great Tree did no such thing;
He smiled to hear them whispering.

"Come, children, all to bed," he cried;
And ere the leaves could urge their prayer,
He shook his head, and far and wide,
Fluttering and rustling everywhere,
Down sped the leaflets through the air.

I saw them; on the ground they lay,
Golden and red, a huddled swarm,
Waiting till one from far away,
White bedclothes heaped upon her arm,
Should come to wrap them safe and warm.

The great bare Tree looked down and smiled.
"Goodnight dear little leaves," he said.
And from below each sleepy child
Replied, "Goodnight," and murmured,
"It is so nice to go to bed!"

Susan Coolidge [1835–1905]

A LEGEND OF THE NORTHLAND

Away, away in the Northland,
Where the hours of the day are few,
And the nights are so long in winter
That they cannot sleep them through;

Where they harness the swift reindeer
To the sledges, when it snows;
And the children look like bear's cubs
In their funny, furry clothes:

They tell them a curious story –
I don't believe 'tis true;
And yet you may learn a lesson
If I tell the tale to you.

Once, when the good Saint Peter
Lived in the world below,
And walked about it, preaching,
Just as he did, you know,

He came to the door of a cottage,
In traveling round the earth,
Where a little woman was making cakes,
And baking them on the hearth;

And being faint with fasting,
For the day was almost done,
He asked her, from her store of cakes,
To give him a single one.

So she made a very little cake,
But as it baking lay,
She looked at it, and thought it seemed
Too large to give away.

Therefore she kneaded another,
And still a smaller one;
But it looked, when she turned it over,
As large as the first had done.

Then she took a tiny scrap of dough,
And rolled and rolled it flat;
And baked it thin as a wafer –
But she couldn't part with that.

For she said, "My cakes that seem too small

When I eat of them myself,
Are yet too large to give away."
So she put them on the shelf.

Then good Saint Peter grew angry,
For he was hungry and faint;
And surely such a woman
Was enough to provoke a saint.

And he said, "You are far too selfish
To dwell in a human form,
To have both food and shelter,
And fire to keep you warm.

"Now, you shall build as the birds do,
And shall get your scanty food
By boring, and boring, and boring,
All day in the hard, dry wood."

Then up she went through the chimney,
Never speaking a word,
And out of the top flew a woodpecker,
For she was changed to a bird.

She had a scarlet cap on her head,
And that was left the same,
But all the rest of her clothes were burned
Black as a coal in the flame.

And every country school-boy
Has seen her in the wood,
Where she lives in the trees till this very day,
Boring and boring for food.

And this is the lesson she teaches:
Live not for yourself alone,
Lest the needs you will not pity
Shall one day be your own.

Give plenty of what is given to you,
Listen to pity's call;
Don't think the little you give is great,
And the much you get is small.

Now, my little boy, remember that,
And try to be kind and good,
When you see the woodpecker's sooty dress,
And see her scarlet hood.

You mayn't be changed to a bird though you live
As selfishly as you can;

But you will be changed to a smaller thing –
A mean and selfish man.

Phoebe Cary [1824–1871]

THE CRICKET'S STORY

The high and mighty lord of Glendare,
The owner of acres both broad and fair,
Searched, once on a time, his vast domains,
His deep, green forest, and yellow plains,
For some rare singer, to make complete
The studied charms of his country-seat;
But found, for all his pains and labors,
No sweeter songster than had his neighbors.

Ah, what shall my lord of the manor do?
He pondered the day and the whole night through.
He called on the gentry of hill-top and dale;
And at last on Madame the Nightingale, –
Inviting, in his majestic way,
Her pupils to sing at his grand soiree,
That perchance among them my lord might find
Some singer to whom his heart inclined.
What wonder, then, when the evening came,
And the castle gardens were all aflame
With the many curious lights that hung
O'er the ivied porches, and flared among
The grand old trees and the banners proud,
That many a heart beat high and loud,
While the famous choir of Glendare Bog,
Established and led by the Brothers Frog,
Sat thrumming as hoarsely as they were able,
In front of the manager's mushroom table!

The overture closed with a crash – then, hark!
Across the stage comes the sweet-voiced Lark.
She daintily sways, with an airy grace,
And flutters a bit of gossamer lace,
While the leafy alcove echoes and thrills
With her liquid runs and lingering trills.
Miss Goldfinch came next, in her satin gown,
And shaking her feathery flounces down,
With much expression and feeling sung
Some "Oh's" and "Ah's" in a foreign tongue;
While to give the affair a classic tone,
Miss Katydid rendered a song of her own,
In which each line closed as it had begun,
With some wonderful deed which she had done.
Then the Misses Sparrow, so prim and set,
Twittered and chirped through a long duet;
And poor little Wren, who tried with a will,
But who couldn't tell "Heber" from "Ortonville,"

Unconscious of sarcasm, piped away
And courtesied low o'er a huge bouquet
Of crimson clover-heads, culled by the dozen,
By some brown-coated, plebeian cousin.

But you should have heard the red Robin sing
His English ballad, "Come, beautiful Spring!"
And Master Owlet's melodious tune,
"O, meet me under the silvery moon!"
Then, as flighty Miss Humming-bird didn't care
To sing for the high and mighty Glendare,
The close of the evening's performance fell
To the fair young Nightingale, Mademoiselle.
Ah! the wealth of each wonderful note
That came from the depths of her tiny throat!
She carolled, she trilled, and she held her breath,
Till she seemed to hang at the point of death:
She ran the chromatics through every key,
And ended triumphant on upper C;
Airing the graces her mother had taught her
In a manner quite worthy of Madame's daughter.

But his lordship glared down the leafy aisle
With never so much as a nod or smile,
Till, out in the shade of a blackberry thicket,
He all of a sudden spied little Miss Cricket;
And, roused from his gloom, like an angry bat,
He sternly demanded, "Who is that?"
"Miss Cricket, my lord, may it please you so,
A charity scholar – ahem! – you know –
Quite worthy, of course, but we couldn't bring" –
Thundered His Mightiness, "Let her sing!"
The Nightingale opened her little eyes
Extremely wide in her blank surprise;
But catching a glimpse of his lordship's rage,
Led little Miss Cricket upon the stage,
Where she modestly sang, in her simple measures,
Of "Home, sweet Home," and its humble pleasures.
And the lord of Glendare cried out in his glee,
"This little Miss Cricket shall sing for me!"

Of course, of comment there was no need;
But the world said, "Really!" and "Ah, indeed!"
Yet, notwithstanding, we find it true
As his lordship does will the neighbors do;
So this is the way, as the legends tell,
In the very beginning it befell
That the Crickets came, in the evening's gloom,
To sing at our hearths of "Home, sweet Home."

Emma Huntington Nason [1845–1921]

THE SINGING-LESSON

A nightingale made a mistake;
She sang a few notes out of tune;
Her heart was ready to break,
And she hid away from the moon.
She wrung her claws, poor thing!
But was far too proud to weep;
She tucked her head under her wing,
And pretended to be asleep.

A lark, arm in arm with a thrush,
Came sauntering up to the place;
The nightingale felt herself blush,
Though feathers hid her face.
She knew they had heard her song,
She felt them snicker and sneer;
She thought that life was too long,
And wished she could skip a year.

"Oh, Nightingale," cooed a dove –
"Oh, Nightingale, what's the use?
You bird of beauty and love,
Why behave like a goose?
Don't skulk away from our sight,
Like a common, contemptible fowl;
You bird of joy and delight,
Why behave like an owl?"

"Only think of all you have done,
Only think of all you can do;
A false note is really fun
From such a bird as you!
Lift up your proud little crest,
Open your musical beak;
Other birds have to do their best –
You need only to speak."

The nightingale shyly took
Her head from under her wing,
And, giving the dove a look,
Straightway began to sing.
There was never a bird could pass;
The night was divinely calm,
And the people stood on the grass
To hear that wonderful psalm.

The nightingale did not care;

She only sang to the skies;
Her song ascended there,
And there she fixed her eyes.
The people that stood below
She knew but little about;
And this tale has a moral, I know,
If you'll try to find it out.

Jean Ingelow [1820–1897]

CHANTICLEER

Of all the birds from East to West
That tuneful are and dear,
I love that farmyard bird the best,
They call him Chanticleer.

Gold plume and copper plume,
Comb of scarlet gay;
'Tis he that scatters night and gloom,
And whistles back the day!

He is the sun's brave herald
That, ringing his blithe horn,
Calls round a world dew-pearled
The heavenly airs of morn.

O clear gold, shrill and bold!
He calls through creeping mist
The mountains from the night and cold
To rose and amethyst.

He sets the birds to singing,
And calls the flowers to rise;
The morning cometh, bringing
Sweet sleep to heavy eyes.

Gold plume and silver plume,
Comb of coral gay;
'Tis he packs off the night and gloom,
And summons home the day!

Black fear he sends it flying,
Black care he drives afar;
And creeping shadows sighing
Before the morning star.

The birds of all the forest
Have dear and pleasant cheer,
But yet I hold the rarest
The farmyard Chanticleer.

Red cock or black cock,
Gold cock or white,
The flower of all the feathered flock,
He whistles back the light!

Katherine Tynan Hinkson [1861–1931]

"WHAT DOES LITTLE BIRDIE SAY?"

From "Sea Dreams"

What does little birdie say
In her nest at peep of day?
Let me fly, says little birdie,
Mother, let me fly away.
Birdie, rest a little longer,
Till the little wings are stronger.
So she rests a little longer,
Then she flies away.

What does little baby say,
In her bed at peep of day?
Baby says, like little birdie,
Let me rise and fly away.
Baby, sleep a little longer,
Till the little limbs are stronger,
If she sleeps a little longer,
Baby too shall fly away.

Alfred Tennyson [1809–1892]

NURSE'S SONG

When the voices of children are heard on the green
And laughing is heard on the hill,
My heart is at rest within my breast,
And everything else is still.

"Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down,
And the dews of the night arise;
Come, come, leave off play, and let us away
Till the morning appears in the skies."

"No, no, let us play, for it is yet day,
And we cannot go to sleep;
Besides in the sky the little birds fly,
And the hills are all covered with sheep."

"Well, well, go and play till the light fades away,
And then go home to bed."
The little ones leaped and shouted and laughed;
And all the hills echoed.

William Blake [1757–1827]

JACK FROST

The door was shut, as doors should be,
Before you went to bed last night;
Yet Jack Frost has got in, you see,
And left your window silver white.

He must have waited till you slept;
And not a single word he spoke,
But pencilled o'er the panes and crept
Away again before you woke.

And now you cannot see the hills
Nor fields that stretch beyond the lane;
But there are fairer things than these
His fingers traced on every pane.

Rocks and castles towering high;
Hills and dales, and streams and fields;
And knights in armor riding by,
With nodding plumes and shining shields.

And here are little boats, and there
Big ships with sails spread to the breeze;
And yonder, palm trees waving fair
On islands set in silver seas.

And butterflies with gauzy wings;
And herds of cows and flocks of sheep;
And fruit and flowers and all the things
You see when you are sound asleep.

For creeping softly underneath
The door when all the lights are out,
Jack Frost takes every breath you breathe,
And knows the things you think about.

He paints them on the window pane
In fairy lines with frozen steam;
And when you wake you see again
The lovely things you saw in dream.

Gabriel Setoun [1861–

OCTOBER'S PARTY

October gave a party;
The leaves by hundreds came –
The Chestnuts, Oaks, and Maples,
And leaves of every name.
The Sunshine spread a carpet,
And everything was grand,
Miss Weather led the dancing,
Professor Wind the band.

The Chestnuts came in yellow,
The Oaks in crimson dressed;
The lovely Misses Maple
In scarlet looked their best;
All balanced to their partners,
And gaily fluttered by;
The sight was like a rainbow
New fallen from the sky.

Then, in the rustic hollow,
At hide-and-seek they played,
The party closed at sundown,
And everybody stayed.
Professor Wind played louder;
They flew along the ground;
And then the party ended
In jolly "hands around."

George Cooper [1840–1927]

THE SHEPHERD

How sweet is the Shepherd's sweet lot!
From the morn to the evening he strays;
He shall follow his sheep all the day,
And his tongue shall be filled with praise.
For he hears the lamb's innocent call,
And he hears the ewe's tender reply;
He is watchful, while they are in peace,
For they know when their Shepherd is nigh.

William Blake [1757–1827]

NIKOLINA

O tell me, little children, have you seen her –
The tiny maid from Norway, Nikolina?
O, her eyes are blue as cornflowers, mid the corn,
And her cheeks are rosy red as skies of morn!

Nikolina! swift she turns if any call her,
As she stands among the poppies, hardly taller,
Breaking off their scarlet cups for you,
With spikes of slender larkspur, burning blue.

In her little garden many a flower is growing –
Red, gold, and purple in the soft wind blowing,
But the child that stands amid the blossoms gay
Is sweeter, quainter, brighter e'en than they.

Celia Thaxter [1835–1894]

LITTLE GUSTAVA

Little Gustava sits in the sun,
Safe in the porch, and the little drops run
From the icicles under the eaves so fast,
For the bright spring sun shines warm at last,
And glad is little Gustava.

She wears a quaint little scarlet cap,
And a little green bowl she holds in her lap,
Filled with bread and milk to the brim,
And a wreath of marigolds round the rim:
"Ha! ha!" laughs little Gustava.

Up comes her little gray coaxing cat
With her little pink nose, and she mews, "What's that?"
Gustava feeds her, – she begs for more;
And a little brown hen walks in at the door:
"Good day!" cries little Gustava.

She scatters crumbs for the little brown hen.
There comes a rush and a flutter, and then
Down fly her little white doves so sweet,
With their snowy wings and crimson feet:
"Welcome!" cries little Gustava.

So dainty and eager they pick up the crumbs.
But who is this through the doorway comes?
Little Scotch terrier, little dog Rags,
Looks in her face, and his funny tail wags:
"Ha! ha!" laughs little Gustava.

"You want some breakfast too?" and down
She sets her bowl on the brick floor brown;
And little dog Rags drinks up her milk,
While she strokes his shaggy locks like silk:
"Dear Rags!" says little Gustava.

Waiting without stood sparrow and crow,
Cooling their feet in the melting snow:
"Won't you come in, good folk?" she cried.
But they were too bashful, and stood outside
Though "Pray come in!" cried Gustava.

So the last she threw them, and knelt on the mat
With doves and biddy and dog and cat.
And her mother came to the open house-door:
"Dear little daughter, I bring you some more.

My merry little Gustava!"

Kitty and terrier, biddy and doves,
All things harmless Gustava loves.
The shy, kind creatures 'tis joy to feed,
And oh, her breakfast is sweet indeed
To happy little Gustava!

Celia Thaxter [1835–1894]

PRINCE TATTERS

Little Prince Tatters has lost his cap!
Over the hedge he threw it;
Into the river it fell "kerslap!"
Stupid old thing to do it!
Now Mother may sigh and Nurse may fume
For the gay little cap with its eagle plume.
"One cannot be thinking all day of such matters!
Trifles are trifles!" says little Prince Tatters.

Little Prince Tatters has lost his coat!
Playing, he did not need it;
"Left it right there, by the nanny-goat,
And nobody never seed it!"
Now Mother and Nurse may search till night
For the little new coat with its buttons bright;
But – "Coat-sleeves or shirt-sleeves, how little it matters!
Trifles are trifles!" says little Prince Tatters.

Little Prince Tatters has LOST HIS BALL!
Rolled away down the street!
Somebody'll have to find it, that's all,
Before he can sleep or eat.
Now raise the neighborhood, quickly, do!
And send for the crier and constable too!
"Trifles are trifles; but serious matters,
They must be seen to," says little Prince Tatters.

Laura E. Richards [1850–

THE LITTLE BLACK BOY

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but oh, my soul is white!
White as an angel is the English child,
But I am black, as if bereaved of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree,
And, sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap and kissed me,
And, pointing to the East, began to say:

"Look on the rising sun, – there God does live,
And gives His light, and gives His heat away;
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning, joy in the noonday.

"And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love;
And these black bodies and this sunburnt face
Are but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

"For, when our souls have learned the heat to bear,
The cloud will vanish, we shall hear His voice,
Saying: 'Come out from the grove, My love and care,
And round My golden tent like lambs rejoice.'"

Thus did my mother say, and kissed me;
And thus I say to little English boy.
When I from black, and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy,

I'll shade him from the heat, till he can bear
To lean in joy upon our Father's knee;
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him, and he will then love me.

William Blake [1757–1827]

THE BLIND BOY

O say what is that thing called Light,
Which I must ne'er enjoy;
What are the blessings of the sight,
O tell your poor blind boy!

You talk of wondrous things you see,
You say the sun shines bright;
I feel him warm, but how can he,
Or make it day or night?

My day or night myself I make
Whene'er I sleep or play;
And could I ever keep awake
With me 'twere always day.

With heavy sighs I often hear
You mourn my hapless woe;
But sure with patience I can bear
A loss I ne'er can know.

Then let not what I cannot have
My cheer of mind destroy:
Whilst thus I sing, I am a king,
Although a poor blind boy.

Colley Cibber [1671–1757]

BUNCHES OF GRAPES

"Bunches of grapes," says Timothy,
"Pomegranates pink," says Elaine;
"A junket of cream and a cranberry tart
For me," says Jane.

"Love-in-a-mist," says Timothy,
"Primroses pale," says Elaine;
"A nosegay of pinks and mignonette
For me," says Jane.

"Chariots of gold," says Timothy,
"Silvery wings," says Elaine;
"A bumpety ride in a wagon of hay
For me," says Jane.

Walter de la Mare [1873–

MY SHADOW

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

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

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

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

Robert Louis Stevenson [1850–1894]

THE LAND OF COUNTERPANE

When I was sick and lay a-bed,
I had two pillows at my head,
And all my toys beside me lay
To keep me happy all the day.

And sometimes for an hour or so
I watched my leaden soldiers go,
With different uniforms and drills,
Among the bed-clothes, through the hills;

And sometimes sent my ships in fleets
All up and down among the sheets;
Or brought my trees and houses out,
And planted cities all about.

I was the giant great and still
That sits upon the pillow-hill,
And sees before him, dale and plain,
The pleasant land of counterpane.

Robert Louis Stevenson [1850–1894]

THE LAND OF STORY-BOOKS

At evening when the lamp is lit,
Around the fire my parents sit;
They sit at home and talk and sing,
And do not play at anything.

Now, with my little gun, I crawl
All in the dark along the wall,
And follow round the forest track
Away behind the sofa back.

There, in the night, where none can spy,
All in my hunter's camp I lie,
And play at books that I have read
Till it is time to go to bed.

These are the hills, these are the woods,
These are my starry solitudes;
And there the river by whose brink
The roaring lions come to drink.

I see the others far away
As if in firelit camp they lay,
And I, like to an Indian scout,
Around their party prowled about.

So, when my nurse comes in for me,
Home I return across the sea,
And go to bed with backward looks
At my dear land of Story-books.

Robert Louis Stevenson [1850-1894]

THE GARDENER

The gardener does not love to talk,
He makes me keep the gravel walk;
And when he puts his tools away,
He locks the door and takes the key.

Away behind the currant row
Where no one else but cook may go,
Far in the plots, I see him dig,
Old and serious, brown and big.

He digs the flowers, green, red, and blue,
Nor wishes to be spoken to.
He digs the flowers and cuts the hay,
And never seems to want to play.

Silly gardener! summer goes,
And winter comes with pinching toes,
When in the garden bare and brown
You must lay your barrow down.

Well now, and while the summer stays,
To profit by these garden days
O how much wiser you would be
To play at Indian wars with me!

Robert Louis Stevenson [1850–1894]

FOREIGN LANDS

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

I saw the next door garden lie,
Adorned with flowers, before my eye,
And many pleasant places more
That I had never seen before.

I saw the dimpling river pass
And be the sky's blue looking-glass;
The dusty roads go up and down
With people tramping in to town.

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

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

Robert Louis Stevenson [1850–1894]

MY BED IS A BOAT

My bed is like a little boat;
Nurse helps me in when I embark;
She girds me in my sailor's coat
And starts me in the dark.

At night, I go on board and say
Good night to all my friends on shore;
I shut my eyes and sail away
And see and hear no more.

And sometimes things to bed I take,
As prudent sailors have to do;
Perhaps a slice of wedding-cake,
Perhaps a toy or two.

All night across the dark we steer;
But when the day returns at last,
Safe in my room, beside the pier,
I find my vessel fast.

Robert Louis Stevenson [1850–1894]

THE PEDDLER'S CARAVAN

I wish I lived in a caravan,
With a horse to drive, like a peddler-man!
Where he comes from nobody knows,
Or where he goes to, but on he goes!

His caravan has windows two,
And a chimney of tin, that the smoke comes through;
He has a wife, with a baby brown,
And they go riding from town to town.

Chairs to mend, and delf to sell!
He clashes the basins like a bell;
Tea-trays, baskets ranged in order,
Plates, with alphabets round the border!

The roads are brown, and the sea is green,
But his house is like a bathing-machine;
The world is round, and he can ride,
Rumble and slash, to the other side!

With the peddler-man I should like to roam,
And write a book when I came home;
All the people would read my book,
Just like the Travels of Captain Cook!

William Brighty Rands [1823–1882]

MR. COGGS

A watch will tell the time of day,
Or tell it nearly, any way,
Excepting when it's overwound,
Or when you drop it on the ground.

If any of our watches stop,
We haste to Mr. Coggs's shop;
For though to scold us he pretends,
He's quite among our special friends.

He fits a dice-box in his eye,
And takes a long and thoughtful spy,
And prods the wheels, and says, "Dear, dear!
More carelessness, I greatly fear."

And then he lays the dice-box down
And frowns a most prodigious frown;
But if we ask him what's the time,
He'll make his gold repeater chime.

Edward Verrall Lucas [1868-

THE BUILDING OF THE NEST

They'll come again to the apple tree –
Robin and all the rest –
When the orchard branches are fair to see,
In the snow of the blossoms dressed;
And the prettiest thing in the world will be
The building of the nest.

Weaving it well, so round and trim,
Hollowing it with care, –
Nothing too far away for him,
Nothing for her too fair, –
Hanging it safe on the topmost limb,
Their castle in the air.

Ah! mother bird, you'll have weary days
When the eggs are under your breast,
And shadow may darken the dancing rays
When the wee ones leave the nest;
But they'll find their wings in a glad amaze.
And God will see to the rest.

So come to the trees with all your train
When the apple blossoms blow;
Through the April shimmer of sun and rain,
Go flying to and fro;
And sing to our hearts as we watch again
Your fairy building grow.

Margaret Sangster [1838–1912]

"THERE WAS A JOLLY MILLER"

From "Love in a Village"

There was a jolly miller once lived on the river Dee;
He danced and sang from morn till night, no lark so blithe as he;
And this the burden of his song forever used to be: –
"I care for nobody, no not I, if nobody cares for me.

"I live by my mill, God bless her! she's kindred, child, and wife;
I would not change my station for any other in life;
No lawyer, surgeon, or doctor e'er had a groat from me;
I care for nobody, no not I if nobody cares for me."

When spring begins his merry career, oh, how his heart grows gay;
No summer's drought alarms his fear, nor winter's cold decay;
No foresight mars the miller's joy, who's wont to sing and say,
"Let others toil from year to year, I live from day to day."

Thus, like the miller, bold and free, let us rejoice and sing;
The days of youth are made for glee, and time is on the wing;
This song shall pass from me to thee, along the jovial ring;
Let heart and voice and all agree to say, "Long live the king."

Isaac Bickerstaff [? –1812?]

ONE AND ONE

Two little girls are better than one,
Two little boys can double the fun,
Two little birds can build a fine nest,
Two little arms can love mother best.
Two little ponies must go to a span;
Two little pockets has my little man;
Two little eyes to open and close,
Two little ears and one little nose,
Two little elbows, dimpled and sweet,
Two little shoes on two little feet,
Two little lips and one little chin,
Two little cheeks with a rose shut in;
Two little shoulders, chubby and strong,
Two little legs running all day long.
Two little prayers does my darling say,
Twice does he kneel by my side each day,
Two little folded hands, soft and brown,
Two little eyelids cast meekly down,
And two little angels guard him in bed,
"One at the foot, and one at the head."

Mary Mapes Dodge [1831–1905]

A NURSERY SONG

Oh, Peterkin Pout and Gregory Grout
Are two little goblins black.
Full oft from my house I've driven them out,
But somehow they still come back.

They clamber up to the baby's mouth,
And pull the corners down;
They perch aloft on the baby's brow,
And twist it into a frown.

Chorus:

And one says "Must!" and t'other says "Can't!"
And one says "Shall!" and t'other says "Shan't!"
Oh, Peterkin Pout and Gregory Grout,
I pray you now from my house keep out!

But Samuel Smile and Lemuel Laugh
Are two little fairies bright;
They're always ready for fun and chaff,
And sunshine is their delight.

And when they creep into Baby's eyes,
Why, there the sunbeams are;
And when they peep through her rosy lips,
Her laughter rings near and far.

Chorus:

And one says "Please!" and t'other says "Do!"
And both together say "I love you!"
So, Lemuel Laugh and Samuel Smile,
Come in, my dears, and tarry awhile!

Laura E. Richards [1850–

A MORTIFYING MISTAKE

I studied my tables over and over, and backward and forward, too;
But I couldn't remember six times nine, and I didn't know what to do,
Till sister told me to play with my doll, and not to bother my head.
"If you call her 'Fifty-four' for a while, you'll learn it by heart,"
she said.

So I took my favorite, Mary Ann (though I thought 'twas a dreadful shame
To give such a perfectly lovely child such a perfectly horrid name),
And I called her my dear little "Fifty-four" a hundred times, till I knew
The answer of six times nine as well as the answer of two times two.

Next day Elizabeth Wigglesworth, who always acts so proud,
Said, "Six times nine is fifty-two," and I nearly laughed aloud!
But I wished I hadn't when teacher said, "Now, Dorothy, tell if you can."
For I thought of my doll and – sakes alive! – I answered, "Mary Ann!"

Anna Maria Pratt [18 –

THE RAGGEDY MAN

O the Raggedy Man! He works fer Pa;
An' he's the goodest man ever you saw!
He comes to our house every day,
An' waters the horses, an' feeds 'em hay;
An' he opens the shed – an' we all ist laugh
When he drives out our little old wobble-ly calf;
An' nen – ef our hired girl says he can –
He milks the cow fer 'Lizabuth Ann. –
Ain't he a' awful good Raggedy Man?
Raggedy! Raggedy! Raggedy Man!

W'y, the Raggedy Man – he's ist so good
He splits the kindlin' an' chops the wood;
An' nen he spades in our garden, too,
An' does most things 'at boys can't do. –
He clumbed clean up in our big tree
An' shooked a' apple down fer me –
An' nother'n', too, fer 'Lizabuth Ann –
An' nother'n', too, fer the Raggedy Man. –
Ain't he a' awful kind Raggedy Man?
Raggedy! Raggedy! Raggedy Man!

An' the Raggedy Man, be knows most rhymes
An' tells 'em, ef I be good, sometimes:
Knows 'bout Giunts, an' Griffuns, an' Elves,

An' the Squidgicum–Squees 'at swallers therselves!
An', wite by the pump in our pasture–lot,
He showed me the hole 'at the Wunks is got,
'At lives 'way deep in the ground, an' can
Turn into me, er 'Lizabuth Ann!
Er Ma, er Pa, er the Raggedy Man!
Ain't he a funny old Raggedy Man?
Raggedy! Raggedy! Raggedy Man!

The Raggedy Man – one time when he
Was makin' a little bow–n'–orry fer me,
Says, "When you're big like your Pa is,
Air you go' to keep a fine store like his –
An' be a rich merchunt – an' wear fine clothes? –
Er what air you go' to be, goodness knows?"
An' nen he laughed at 'Lizabuth Ann,
An' I says "'M go' to be a Raggedy Man! –
I'm ist go' to be a nice Raggedy Man!"
Raggedy! Raggedy! Raggedy Man!

James Whitcomb Riley [1849–1916]

THE MAN IN THE MOON

Said the Raggedy Man, on a hot afternoon,
"My!
Sakes!
What a lot o' mistakes
Some little folks makes on The Man in the Moon!
But people that's b'en up to see him, like me,
And calls on him frequent and intimutly,
Might drop a few facts that would interest you
Clean!
Through! –
If you wanted 'em to –
Some actual facts that might interest you!

"O The Man in the Moon has a crick in his back;
Whee!
Whimm!
Ain't you sorry for him?
And a mole on his nose that is purple and black;
And his eyes are so weak that they water and run
If he dares to dream even he looks at the sun. –
So he jes' dreams of stars, as the doctors advise –
My!
Eyes!
But isn't he wise –
To jes' dream of stars, as the doctors advise?

"And The Man in the Moon has a boil on his ear, –
Whee!
Whing!
What a singular thing!
I know! but these facts are authentic, my dear, –
There's a boil on his ear; and a corn on his chin, –
He calls it a dimple – but dimples stick in –
Yet it might be a dimple turned over, you know!
Whang!
Ho!
Why, certainly so! –
It might be a dimple turned over, you know!

"And The Man in the Moon has a rheumatic knee, –
Gee!
Whizz!
What a pity that is!
And his toes have worked round where his heels ought to be.
So whenever he wants to go North he goes South,
And comes back with porridge crumbs all round his mouth,

And he brushes them off with a Japanese fan.
Whing!
Whann!
What a marvelous man!
What a very remarkably marvelous man!

"And The Man in the Moon," sighed the Raggedy Man,
"Gits!
So!
Sullonesome, you know, –
Up there by hisse'f sence creation began! –
That when I call on him and then come away,
He grabs me and holds me and begs me to stay, –
Till – Well! if it wasn't fer Jimmy–cum–Jim,
Dadd!
Limb!
I'd go pardners with him –
Jes' jump my job here and be pardners with him!"

James Whitcomb Riley [1849–1916]

LITTLE ORPHANT ANNIE

Little Orphant Annie's come to our house to stay,
An' wash the cups an' saucers up, an' brush the crumbs away,
An' shoo the chickens off the porch, an' dust the hearth, an' sweep,
An' make the fire, an' bake the bread, an' earn her board an'-keep;
An' all us other children, when the supper things is done,
We set around the kitchen fire an' has the mostest fun
A-list'nin' to the witch-tales 'at Annie tells about,
An' the Gobble-uns 'at gits you
Ef you
Don't
Watch
Out!

Onc't they was a little boy wouldn't say his prayers –
An' when he went to bed at night, away up stairs,
His Mammy heered him holler, an' his Daddy heered him bawl,
An' when they turn't the kivvers down, he wasn't there at all!
An' they seeked him in the rafter-room, an' cubby-hole, an' press,
An' seeked him up the chimbly-flue, an' ever'wheres, I guess;
But all they ever found was thist his pants an' roundabout:
An' the Gobble-uns 'll git you
Ef you
Don't
Watch
Out!

An' one time a little girl 'ud allus laugh an' grin,
An' make fun of ever' one, an' all her blood-an'-kin;
An' onc't when they was "company," an' ole folks was there,
She mocked 'em an' shocked 'em, an' said she didn't care!
An' thist as she kicked her heels, an' turn't to run an' hide,
They was two great big Black Things a-standin' by her side,
An' they snatched her through the ceilin' 'fore she knowed what
she's about!
An' the Gobble-uns 'll git you
Ef you
Don't
Watch
Out!

An' little Orphant Annie says, when the blaze is blue,
An' the lamp-wick sputters, an' the wind goes woo-oo!
An' you hear the crickets quit, an' the moon is gray,
An' the lightnin'-bugs in dew is all squenched away, –
You better mind yer parents, an' yer teachers fond and dear,
An' churish them 'at loves you, an' dry the orphant's tear,

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An' he'p the pore an' needy ones 'at clusters all about,
Er the Gobble-uns 'll git you
Ef you
Don't
Watch
Out!

James Whitcomb Riley [1849-1916]

OUR HIRED GIRL

Our hired girl, she's 'Lizabuth Ann;
An' she can cook best things to eat!
She ist puts dough in our pie-pan,
An' pours in somepin' 'at's good an' sweet;
An' nen she salts it all on top
With cinnamon; an' nen she'll stop
An' stoop an' slide it, ist as slow,
In th' old cook-stove, so's 'twon't slop
An' git all spilled; nen bakes it, so
It's custard-pie, first thing you know!
An' nen she'll say,
"Clear out o' my way!
They's time fer work, an' time fer play!
Take yer dough, an' run, child, run!
Er I cain't git no cookin' done!"

When our hired girl 'tends like she's mad,
An' says folks got to walk the chalk
When she's around, er wisht they had!
I play out on our porch an' talk
To Th' Raggedy Man 'at mows our lawn;
An' he says, "Whew!" an' nen leans on
His old crook-scythe, and blinks his eyes,
An' sniffs all 'round an' says, "I swawn!
Ef my old nose don't tell me lies,
It 'pears like I smell custard-pies!"
An' nen he'll say,
"Clear out o' my way!
They's time fer work, an' time for play!
Take yer dough, an' run, child, run!
Er she cain't git no cookin' done!"

Wunst our hired girl, when she
Got the supper, an' we all et,
An' it wuz night, an' Ma an' me
An' Pa went wher' the "Social" met, –
An' nen when we come home, an' see
A light in the kitchen door, an' we
Heerd a maccordeun, Pa says, "Lan' –
O-Gracious, who can her beau be?"
An' I marched in, an' 'Lizabuth Ann
Wuz parchin' corn fer The Raggedy Man!
Better say,
"Clear out o' the way!
They's time fer work, an' time fer play!
Take the hint, an' run, child, run!"

Er we cain't git no courtin' done!"

James Whitcomb Riley [1849–1916]

SEEIN' THINGS

I ain't afeard uv snakes, or toads, or bugs, or worms, or mice,
An' things 'at girls are skeered uv I think are awful nice!
I'm pretty brave, I guess; an' yet I hate to go to bed,
For, when I'm tucked up warm an' snug an' when my prayers are said,
Mother tells me "Happy Dreams!" an' takes away the light,
An' leaves me lyin' all alone an' seein' things at night!

Sometimes they're in the corner, sometimes they're by the door,
Sometimes they're all a-standin' in the middle uv the floor;
Sometimes they are a-sittin' down, sometimes they're walkin' round
So softly and so creepylke they never make a sound!
Sometimes they are as black as ink, an' other times they're white –
But the color ain't no difference when you see things at night!

Once, when I licked a feller 'at had just moved on our street,
An' father sent me up to bed without a bite to eat,
I woke up in the dark an' saw things standin' in a row,
A-lookin' at me cross-eyed an' p'intin' at me – so!
Oh, my! I wuz so skeered that time I never slep' a mite –
It's almost alluz when I'm bad I see things at night!

Lucky thing I ain't a girl, or I'd be skeered to death!
Bein' I'm a boy, I duck my head an' hold my breath;
An' I am, oh, so sorry I'm a naughty boy, an' then
I promise to be better an' I say my prayers again!
Gran'ma tells me that's the only way to make it right
When a feller has been wicked an' sees things at night!

An' so, when other naughty boys would coax me into sin,
I try to skwush the Tempter's voice 'at urges me within;
An' when they's pie for supper, or cakes 'at's big an' nice,
I want to – but I do not pass my plate f'r them things twice!
No, ruther let Starvation wipe me slowly out o' sight
Than I should keep a-livin' on an' seein' things at night!

Eugene Field [1850–1895]

THE DUEL

The gingham dog and the calico cat
Side by side on the table sat;
'Twas half past twelve, and (what do you think!)
Nor one nor t'other had slept a wink!
The old Dutch clock and the Chinese plate
Appeared to know as sure as fate
There was going to be a terrible spat.
(I wasn't there: I simply state
What was told to me by the Chinese plate!)

The gingham dog went, "Bow-wow-wow!"
And the calico cat replied, "Mee-ow!"
The air was littered, an hour or so,
With bits of gingham and calico,
While the old Dutch clock in the chimney-place
Up with its hands before its face,
For it always dreaded a family row!
(Now mind; I'm only telling you
What the old Dutch clock declares is true!)

The Chinese plate looked very blue,
And wailed, "Oh, dear! what shall we do!"
But the gingham dog and the calico cat
Wallowed this way and tumbled that,
Employing every tooth and claw
In the awfulest way you ever saw –
And, oh! how the gingham and calico flew!
(Don't fancy I exaggerate –
I got my news from the Chinese plate!)

Next morning, where the two had sat
They found no trace of dog or cat:
And some folks think unto this day
That burglars stole that pair away!
But the truth about the cat and pup
Is this: they ate each other up!
Now what do you really think of that!
(The old Dutch clock it told me so,
And that is how I came to know.)

Eugene Field [1850–1895]

HOLY THURSDAY

'Twas on a Holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,
Came children walking two and two, in red, and blue, and green;
Gray-headed beadles walked before, with wands as white as snow,
Till into the high dome of Paul's they like Thames waters flow.

Oh what a multitude they seemed, these flowers of London town!
Seated in companies they sit, with radiance all their own.
The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs,
Thousands of little boys and girls raising their innocent hands.

Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song,
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of heaven among:
Beneath them sit the aged men, wise guardians of the poor.
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.

William Blake [1757–1827]

A STORY FOR A CHILD

Little one, come to my knee!
Hark, how the rain is pouring
Over the roof, in the pitch-black night,
And the wind in the woods a-roaring!

Hush, my darling, and listen,
Then pay for the story with kisses;
Father was lost in the pitch-black night,
In just such a storm as this is!

High up on the lonely mountains,
Where the wild men watched and waited;
Wolves in the forest, and bears in the bush,
And I on my path belated.

The rain and the night together
Came down and the wind came after,
Bending the props of the pine-tree roof,
And snapping many a rafter.

I crept along in the darkness,
Stunned, and bruised, and blinded, –
Crept to a fir with thick-set boughs,
And a sheltering rock behind it.

There, from the blowing and raining,
Crouching, I sought to hide me:
Something rustled, two green eyes shone,
And a wolf lay down beside me.

Little one, be not frightened;
I and the wolf together,
Side by side, through the long, long night,
Hid from the awful weather.

His wet fur pressed against me;
Each of us warmed the other;
Each of us felt, in the stormy dark,
That beast and man was brother.

And when the falling forest
No longer crashed in warning,
Each of us went from our hiding-place
Forth in the wild, wet morning.

Darling, kiss me payment!

Hark, how the wind is roaring;
Father's house is a better place
When the stormy rain is pouring!

Bayard Taylor [1825–1878]

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY

"Will you walk into my parlor?" said the Spider to the Fly.
"'Tis the prettiest little parlor that ever you did spy;
The way into my parlor is up a winding stair,
And I have many curious things to show when you are there."
"Oh no, no," said the little Fly, "to ask me is in vain;
For who goes up your winding stair can ne'er come down again."

"I'm sure you must be weary, dear, with soaring up so high;
Will you rest upon my little bed?" said the Spider to the Fly.
"There are pretty curtains drawn around, the sheets are fine and thin;
And if you like to rest a while, I'll snugly tuck you in!"
"Oh no, no," said the little Fly, "for I've often heard it said,
They never, never wake again, who sleep upon your bed!"

Said the cunning Spider to the Fly, "Dear friend, what can I do
To prove the warm affection I've always felt for you?
I have, within my pantry, good store of all that's nice;
I'm sure you're very welcome – will you please to take a slice?"
"Oh no, no," said the little Fly, "kind sir, that cannot be,
I've heard what's in your pantry, and I do not wish to see!"

"Sweet creature," said the Spider, "you're witty and you're wise;
How handsome are your gauzy wings, how brilliant are your eyes!
I have a little looking-glass upon my parlor shelf;
If you'll step in one moment, dear, you shall behold yourself."
"I thank you, gentle sir," she said, "for what you're pleased to say,
And bidding you good morning now, I'll call another day."

The Spider turned him round about, and went into his den,
For well he knew the silly Fly would soon be back again;
So he wove a subtle web in a little corner sly,
And set his table ready to dine upon the Fly.
Then he came out to his door again, and merrily did sing, –
"Come hither, hither, pretty Fly, with the pearl and silver wing;
Your robes are green and purple, there's a crest upon your head;
Your eyes are like the diamond bright, but mine are dull as lead."

Alas, alas! how very soon this silly little Fly,
Hearing his wily, flattering words, came slowly flitting by:
With buzzing wings she hung aloft, then near and nearer drew, –
Thinking only of her brilliant eyes, and green and purple hue;
Thinking only of her crested head – poor foolish thing! At last,
Up jumped the cunning Spider, and fiercely held her fast.
He dragged her up his winding stair, into his dismal den
Within his little parlor – but she ne'er came out again!

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And now, dear little children, who may this story read,
To idle, silly, flattering words, I pray you ne'er give heed;
Unto an evil counsellor close heart, and ear, and eye,
And take a lesson from this tale of the Spider and the Fly.

Mary Howitt [1799–1888]

THE CAPTAIN'S DAUGHTER

We were crowded in the cabin,
Not a soul would dare to sleep, –
It was midnight on the waters,
And a storm was on the deep.

'Tis a fearful thing in winter
To be shattered by the blast,
And to hear the rattling trumpet
Thunder, "Cut away the mast!"

So we shuddered there in silence, –
For the stoutest held his breath,
While the hungry sea was roaring
And the breakers talked with death.

As thus we sat in darkness,
Each one busy with his prayers,
"We are lost!" the captain shouted,
As he staggered down the stairs.

But his little daughter whispered,
As she took his icy hand,
"Isn't God upon the ocean,
Just the same as on the land?"

Then we kissed the little maiden,
And we spake in better cheer,
And we anchored safe in harbor
When the morn was shining clear.

James Thomas Fields [1816–1881]

THE NIGHTINGALE AND GLOW-WORM

A nightingale, that all day long
Had cheered the village with his song,
Nor yet at eve his note suspended,
Nor yet when eventide was ended,
Began to feel, as well he might,
The keen demands of appetite;
When, looking eagerly around,
He spied far off, upon the ground,
A something shining in the dark,
And knew the glow-worm by his spark;
So, stooping down from hawthorn top,
He thought to put him in his crop.
The worm, aware of his intent,
Harangued him thus, right eloquent:
"Did you admire my lamp," quoth he,
"As much as I your minstrelsy,
You would abhor to do me wrong,
As much as I to spoil your song;
For 'twas the self-same Power Divine
Taught you to sing, and me to shine;
That you with music, I with light,
Might beautify and cheer the night."
The songster heard his short oration,
And warbling out his approbation,
Released him, as my story tells,
And found a supper somewhere else.
Hence jarring sectaries may learn
Their real interest to discern;
That brother should not war with brother,
And worry and devour each other;
But sing and shine by sweet consent,
Till life's poor transient night is spent,
Respecting in each other's case
The gifts of nature and of grace.
Those Christians best deserve the name
Who studiously make peace their aim;
Peace both the duty and the prize
Of him that creeps and him that flies.

William Cowper [1731-1808]

SIR LARK AND KING SUN: A PARABLE

From "Adela Cathcart"

"Good morrow, my lord!" in the sky alone,
Sang the lark, as the sun ascended his throne.
"Shine on me, my lord; I only am come,
Of all your servants, to welcome you home.
I have flown right up, a whole hour, I swear,
To catch the first shine of your golden hair."

"Must I thank you, then," said the king, "Sir Lark,
For flying so high and hating the dark?
You ask a full cup for half a thirst:
Half was love of me, and half love to be first.
There's many a bird makes no such haste,
But waits till I come: that's as much to my taste."

And King Sun hid his head in a turban of cloud,
And Sir Lark stopped singing, quite vexed and cowed;
But he flew up higher, and thought, "Anon
The wrath of the king will be over and gone;
And his crown, shining out of its cloudy fold,
Will change my brown feathers to a glory of gold."

So he flew – with the strength of a lark he flew;
But, as he rose, the cloud rose too;
And not one gleam of the golden hair
Came through the depths of the misty air;
Till, weary with flying, with sighing sore,
The strong sun-seeker could do no more.

His wings had had no chrism of gold:
And his feathers felt withered and worn and old;
He faltered, and sank, and dropped like a stone.
And there on her nest, where he left her, alone
Sat his little wife on her little eggs,
Keeping them warm with wings and legs.

Did I say alone? Ah, no such thing!
Full in her face was shining the king.
"Welcome, Sir Lark! You look tired," said he;
"Up is not always the best way to me.
While you have been singing so high and away,
I've been shining to your little wife all day."

He had set his crown all about the nest,
And out of the midst shone her little brown breast;
And so glorious was she in russet gold,

That for wonder and awe Sir Lark grew cold.
He popped his head under her wing, and lay
As still as a stone, till King Sun was away.

George Macdonald [1824–1905]

THE COURTSHIP, MERRY MARRIAGE, AND PICNIC DINNER
OF COCK ROBIN AND JENNY WREN

It was a merry time
When Jenny Wren was young,
So neatly as she danced,
And so sweetly as she sung,
Robin Redbreast lost his heart:
He was a gallant bird;
He doffed his hat to Jenny,
And thus to her he said: –

"My dearest Jenny Wren,
If you will but be mine,
You shall dine on cherry pie,
And drink nice currant wine.
I'll dress you like a Goldfinch,
Or like a Peacock gay;
So if you'll have me, Jenny,
Let us appoint the day."

Jenny blushed behind her fan,
And thus declared her mind:
"Then let it be to-morrow, Bob,
I take your offer kind –
Cherry pie is very good!
So is currant wine!

But I will wear my brown gown,
And never dress too fine."

Robin rose up early
At the break of day;
He flew to Jenny Wren's house,
To sing a roundelay.
He met the Cock and Hen,
And bid the Cock declare,
This was his wedding-day
With Jenny Wren, the fair.

The Cock then blew his horn,
To let the neighbors know,
This was Robin's wedding-day,
And they might see the show.
And first came Parson Rook,

With his spectacles and band,
And one of Mother Hubbard's books
He held within his hand.

Then followed him the Lark,
For he could sweetly sing,
And he was to be clerk
At Cock Robin's wedding.
He sang of Robin's love
For little Jenny Wren;
And when he came unto the end,
Then he began again.

Then came the bride and bridegroom;
Quite plainly was she dressed,
And blushed so much, her cheeks were
As red as Robin's breast.
But Robin cheered her up;
"My pretty Jen," said he,
"We're going to be married
And happy we shall be."

The Goldfinch came on next,
To give away the bride;
The Linnet, being bride's maid,
Walked by Jenny's side;
And, as she was a-walking,
She said, "Upon my word,
I think that your Cock Robin
Is a very pretty bird."

The Bulfinch walked by Robin,
And thus to him did say,
"Pray, mark, friend Robin Redbreast,
That Goldfinch, dressed so gay;
What though her gay apparel
Becomes her very well,
Yet Jenny's modest dress and look
Must bear away the bell."

The Blackbird and the Thrush,
And charming Nightingale,
Whose sweet jug sweetly echoes
Through every grove and dale;
The Sparrow and Tom Tit,
And many more, were there:
All came to see the wedding
Of Jenny Wren, the fair.

"O then," says Parson Rook,
"Who gives this maid away?"

"I do," says the Goldfinch,
"And her fortune I will pay:
Here's a bag of grain of many sorts,
And other things beside;
Now happy be the bridegroom,
And happy be the bride!"

"And will you have her, Robin,
To be your wedded wife?"
"Yes, I will," says Robin,
"And love her all my life."
"And will you have him, Jenny,
Your husband now to be?"
"Yes, I will," says Jenny,
"And love him heartily."

Then on her finger fair
Cock Robin put the ring;
"You're married now," says Parson Rook,
While the Lark aloud did sing:
"Happy be the bridegroom,
And happy be the bride!
And may not man, nor bird, nor beast,
This happy pair divide."

The birds were asked to dine;
Not Jenny's friends alone,
But every pretty songster
That had Cock Robin known.
They had a cherry pie,
Beside some currant wine,
And every guest brought something,
That sumptuous they might dine.

Now they all sat or stood
To eat and to drink;
And every one said what
He happened to think:
They each took a bumper,
And drank to the pair:
Cock Robin, the bridegroom,
And Jenny Wren, the fair.

The dinner—things removed,
They all began to sing;
And soon they made the place
Near a mile round to ring.
The concert it was fine;
And every bird tried
Who best could sing for Robin
And Jenny Wren, the bride.

Then in came the Cuckoo and made a great rout;
He caught hold of Jenny and pulled her about.
Cock Robin was angry, and so was the Sparrow,
Who fetched in a hurry his bow and his arrow.

His aim then he took, but he took it not right;
His skill was not good, or he shot in a fright;
For the Cuckoo he missed, but Cock Robin killed! –
And all the birds mourned that his blood was so spilled.

Unknown

THE BABES IN THE WOOD

Now ponder well, you parents dear,
These words, which I shall write;
A doleful story you shall hear,
In time brought forth to light.
A gentleman of good account
In Norfolk dwelt of late,
Who did in honor far surmount
Most men of his estate.

Sore sick was he, and like to die,
No help his life could save;
His wife by him as sick did lie,
And both possessed one grave.
No love between these two was lost,
Each was to other kind;
In love they lived, in loved they died,
And left two babes behind:

The one a fine and pretty boy,
Not passing three years old;
The other a girl more young than he,
And framed in beauty's mold.
The father left his little son,
As plainly does appear,
When he to perfect age should come,
Three hundred pounds a year.

And to his little daughter Jane
Five hundred pounds in gold,
To be paid down on marriage-day,
Which might not be controlled:
But if the children chance to die,
Ere they to age should come,
Their uncle should possess their wealth;
For so the will did run.

"Now, brother," said the dying man,
"Look to my children dear;
Be good unto my boy and girl,
No friends else have they here:
To God and you I recommend
My children dear this day;
But little while be sure we have
Within this world to stay.

"You must be father and mother both,

And uncle all in one;
God knows what will become of them,
When I am dead and gone."
With that bespake their mother dear,
"O brother kind," quoth she,
"You are the man must bring our babes
To wealth or misery.

"And if you keep them carefully
Then God will you reward;
But if you otherwise should deal,
God will your deeds regard."
With lips as cold as any stone,
They kissed their children small:
"God bless you both, my children dear;"
With that the tears did fall.

These speeches then their brother spake
To this sick couple there,
"The keeping of your little ones,
Sweet sister, do not fear;
God never prosper me nor mine,
Nor aught else that I have,
If I do wrong your children dear,
When you are laid in grave."

The parents being dead and gone,
The children home he takes,
And brings them straight into his house,
Where much of them he makes.
He had not kept these pretty babes
A twelvemonth and a day,
But, for their wealth, he did devise
To make them both away.

He bargained with two ruffians strong,
Which were of furious mood,
That they should take these children young,
And slay them in a wood.
He told his wife an artful tale,
He would the children send
To be brought up in fair London,
With one that was his friend.

Away then went these pretty babes,
Rejoicing at that tide,
Rejoicing with a merry mind,
They should on cock-horse ride.
They prate and prattle pleasantly,
As they rode on the way,
To those that should their butchers be,

And work their lives' decay:

So that the pretty speech they had,
Made Murder's heart relent;
And they that undertook the deed,
Full sore did now repent.
Yet one of them more hard of heart,
Did vow to do his charge,
Because the wretch that hired him,
Had paid him very large.

The other won't agree thereto,
So here they fall to strife;
With one another they did fight,
About the children's life:
And he that was of mildest mood,
Did slay the other there,
Within an unfrequented wood;
The babes did quake for fear!

He took the children by the hand,
Tears standing in their eye,
And bade them straightway follow him,
And look they did not cry:
And two long miles he led them on,
While they for food complain:
"Stay here," quoth he, "I'll bring you bread,
When I come back again."

These pretty babes, with hand in hand,
Went wandering up and down,
But never more could see the man
Approaching from the town;
Their pretty lips with black-berries
Were all besmeared and dyed,
And, when they saw the darksome night,
They sat them down and cried.

Thus wandered these poor innocents,
Till death did end their grief;
In one another's arms they died,
As wanting due relief:
No burial this pretty pair
Of any man receives,
Till Robin-red-breast piously
Did cover them with leaves.

And now the heavy wrath of God
Upon their uncle fell;
Yea, fearful fiends did haunt his house,
His conscience felt an hell:

His barns were fired, his goods consumed,
His lands were barren made,
His cattle died within the field,
And nothing with him stayed.

And in a voyage to Portugal
Two of his sons did die;
And, to conclude, himself was brought
To want and misery:
He pawned and mortgaged all his land
Ere seven years came about,
And now at length his wicked act
Did by this means come out:

The fellow, that did take in hand
These children for to kill,
Was for a robbery judged to die,
Such was God's blessed will:
Who did confess the very truth
As here hath been displayed:
Their uncle having died in jail,
Where he for debt was laid.

You that executors be made,
And overseers eke
Of children that be fatherless,
And infants mild and meek;
Take you example by this thing,
And yield to each his right,
Lest God with such like misery
Your wicked minds requite.

Unknown

GOD'S JUDGMENT ON A WICKED BISHOP

The summer and autumn had been so wet,
That in winter the corn was growing yet:
'Twas a piteous sight to see, all around,
The grain lie rotting on the ground.

Every day the starving poor
Crowded around Bishop Hatto's door;
For he had a plentiful last-year's store,
And all the neighborhood could tell
His granaries were furnished well.

At last Bishop Hatto appointed a day
To quiet the poor without delay;
He bade them to his great barn repair,
And they should have food for the winter there.

Rejoiced such tidings good to hear,
The poor folk flocked from far and near;
The great barn was full as it could hold
Of women and children, and young and old.

Then, when he saw it could hold no more,
Bishop Hatto he made fast the door;
And, while for mercy on Christ they call,
He set fire to the barn, and burnt them all.

"I' faith, 'tis an excellent bonfire!" quoth he;
"And the country is greatly obliged to me
For ridding it, in these times forlorn,
Of rats that only consume the corn."

So then to his palace returned he,
And he sat down to supper merrily,
And he slept that night like an innocent man;
But Bishop Hatto never slept again.

In the morning, as he entered the hall,
Where his picture hung against the wall,
A sweat like death all over him came,
For the rats had eaten it out of the frame.

As he looked, there came a man from his farm, —
He had a countenance white with alarm:
"My Lord, I opened your granaries this morn,
And the rats had eaten all your corn."

Another came running presently,
And he was pale as pale could be.
"Fly! my Lord Bishop, fly!" quoth he,
"Ten thousand rats are coming this way, –
The Lord forgive you for yesterday!"

"I'll go to my tower in the Rhine," replied he;
"'Tis the safest place in Germany, –
The walls are high, and the shores are steep,
And the tide is strong, and the water deep."

Bishop Hatto fearfully hastened away,
And he crossed the Rhine without delay,
And reached his tower, and barred with care
All the windows, and doors, and loop-holes there.

He laid him down and closed his eyes,
But soon a scream made him arise;
He started, and saw two eyes of flame
On his pillow, from whence the screaming came.

He listened and looked, – it was only the cat;
But the Bishop he grew more fearful for that,
For she sat screaming, mad with fear,
At the army of rats that were drawing near.

For they have swum over the river so deep,
And they have climbed the shores so steep,
And now by thousands up they crawl
To the holes and the windows in the wall.

Down on his knees the Bishop fell,
And faster and faster his beads did he tell,
As louder and louder, drawing near,
The saw of their teeth without he could hear.

And in at the windows, and in at the door,
And through the walls by thousands they pour;
And down from the ceiling and up through the floor,
From the right and the left, from behind and before,
From within and without, from above and below, –
And all at once to the Bishop they go.

They have whetted their teeth against the stones,
And now they pick the Bishop's bones;
They gnawed the flesh from every limb,
For they were sent to do judgment on him!

Robert Southey [1774–1843]

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

A Child's Story

I

Hamelin Town's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover city;
The river Weser, deep and wide,
Washes its wall on the southern side;
A pleasanter spot you never spied;
But, when begins my ditty,
Almost five hundred years ago,
To see the townsfolk suffer so
From vermin was a pity.

II

Rats!
They fought the dogs and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the women's chats
By drowning their speaking
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.

III

At last the people in a body
To the Town Hall came flocking:
"Tis clear," cried they, "our Mayor's a noddy;
And as for our Corporation, – shocking
To think we buy gowns lined with ermine
For dolts that can't or won't determine
What's best to rid us of our vermin!
You hope, because you're old and obese,
To find in the furry civic robe ease?
Rouse up, sirs! Give your brains a racking,
To find the remedy we're lacking,
Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing!"
At this the Mayor and Corporation
Quaked with a mighty consternation.

IV

An hour they sat in council, –
At length the Mayor broke silence:
"For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell;
I wish I were a mile hence!

It's easy to bid one rack one's brain, –
I'm sure my poor head aches again,
I've scratched it so, and all in vain.
Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap!"
Just as he said this, what should hap
At the chamber-door but a gentle tap?
"Bless us," cried the Mayor, "what's that?"
(With the Corporation as he sat,
Looking little though wondrous fat;
Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister
Than a too-long-opened oyster,
Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous
For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)
"Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?
Anything like the sound of a rat
Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!"

V

"Come in!" the Mayor cried, looking bigger:
And in did come the strangest figure!
His queer long coat from heel to head
Was half of yellow and half of red,
And he himself was tall and thin,
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
But lips where smiles went out and in;
There was no guessing his kith and kin:
And nobody could enough admire
The tall man and his quaint attire.
Quoth one: "It's as my great-grandsire,
Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,
Had walked this way from his painted tombstone!"

VI

He advanced to the council-table:
And, "Please your honors," said he, I'm able,
By means of a secret charm, to draw
All creatures living beneath the sun,
That creep or swim or fly or run,
After me so as you never saw!
And I chiefly use my charm
On creatures that do people harm,
The mole and toad and newt and viper;
And people call me the Pied Piper."
(And here they noticed round his neck
A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
To match with his coat of the self-same check,
And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;
And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying
As if impatient to be playing

Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)
"Yet," said he, "poor piper as I am,
In Tartary I freed the Cham,
Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats;
I eased in Asia the Nizam
Of a monstrous brood of vampire-bats;
And as for what your brain bewilders, –
If I can rid your town of rats,
Will you give me a thousand guilders?"
"One? fifty thousand!" was the exclamation
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

VII

Into the street the Piper stepped,
Smiling first a little smile,
As if he knew what magic slept
In his quiet pipe the while;
Then, like a musical adept,
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,
Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled;
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
You heard as if an army muttered;
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.
Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
Brown rats, black rats, gray rats, tawny rats,
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers;
Families by tens and dozens,
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, –
Followed the Piper for their lives.
From street to street he piped advancing,
And step for step they followed dancing,
Until they came to the river Weser,
Wherein all plunged and perished!
– Save one who, stout as Julius Caesar,
Swam across and lived to carry
(As he, the manuscript he cherished)
To Rat-land home his commentary,
Which was: "At the first shrill notes of the pipe,
I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
Into a cider-press's gripe, –
And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,
And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,
And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks;

And it seemed as if a voice
(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
Is breathed) called out, 'Oh rats, rejoice!
The world is grown to one vast drysaltery!
So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon!
And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,
Already staved, like a great sun shone
Glorious scarce an inch before me,
Just as methought it said, 'Come, bore me!' –
I found the Weser rolling o'er me."

VIII

You should have heard the Hamelin people
Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple;
"Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long poles!
Poke out the nests and block up the holes!
Consult with carpenters and builders,
And leave in our town not even a trace
Of the rats!" – when suddenly, up the face
Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
With a "First, if you please, my thousand guilders!"

IX

A thousand guilders! the Mayor looked blue;
So did the Corporation too.
For council-dinners made rare havoc
With Claret, Moselle, Via-de-Grave, Hock;
And half the money would replenish
Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.
To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
With a gypsy coat of red and yellow!
"Beside," quoth the Mayor, with a knowing wink,
"Our business was done at the river's brink;
We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,
And what's dead can't come to life, I think.
So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink
From the duty of giving you something to drink,
And a matter of money to put in your poke;
But as for the guilders, what we spoke
Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.
Beside, our losses have made us thrifty;
A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!"

X

The Piper's face fell, and he cried,
"No trifling! I can't wait! beside,
I've promised to visit by dinner time
Bagdat, and accept the prime
Of the Head Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,
For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,

Of a nest of scorpions no survivor:
With him I proved no bargain-driver;
With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!
And folks who put me in a passion
May find me pipe after another fashion."

XI

"How?" cried the Mayor, "d'ye think I brook
Being worse treated than a Cook?
Insulted by a lazy ribald
With idle pipe and vesture piebald?
You threaten us, fellow? Do your worst,
Blow your pipe there till you burst!"

XII

Once more he stepped into the street;
And to his lips again
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;
And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning
Never gave the enraptured air)
There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling;
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
Little hands clapping, and little tongues chattering;
And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,
Out came the children running:
All the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

XIII

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
Unable to move a step, or cry
To the children merrily skipping by, –
And could only follow with the eye
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
But how the Mayor was on the rack,
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,
As the Piper turned from the High Street
To where the Weser rolled its waters
Right in the way of their sons and daughters!
However, he turned from south to west,
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,
And after him the children pressed;
Great was the joy in every breast.
"He never can cross that mighty top!
He's forced to let the piping drop,

And we shall see our children stop!"
When, lo, as they reached the mountain-side,
A wondrous portal opened wide,
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;
And the Piper advanced and the children followed;
And when all were in, to the very last,
The door in the mountain-side shut fast.
Did I say, all? No! One was lame,
And could not dance the whole of the way;
And in after years, if you would blame
His sadness, he was used to say, –
"It's dull in our town since my playmates left!
I can't forget that I'm bereft
Of all the pleasant sights they see,
Which the Piper also promised me;
For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,
Joining the town and just at hand,
Where waters gushed, and fruit-trees grew,
And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
And everything was strange and new;
The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,
And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
And honey-bees had lost their stings,
And horses were born with eagles' wings;
And just as I became assured
My lame foot would be speedily cured,
The music stopped and I stood still,
And found myself outside the hill,
Left alone against my will,
To go now limping as before,
And never hear of that country more!

XIV

Alas, alas for Hamelin!
There came into many a burgher's pate
A text which says that heaven's gate
Opes to the rich at as easy rate
As the needle's eye takes a camel in!
The Mayor sent East, West, North and South,
To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,
Wherever it was men's lot to find him,
Silver and gold to his heart's content,
If he'd only return the way he went,
And bring the children behind him.
But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavor,
And piper and dancers were gone forever,
They made a decree that lawyers never
Should think their records dated duly
If, after the day of the month and year,
These words did not as well appear,
"And so long after what happened here

On the Twenty-second of July,
Thirteen hundred and seventy-six:"
And the better in memory to fix
The place of the children's last retreat,
They called it, the Pied Piper's Street –
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
Was sure for the future to lose his labor.
Nor suffered they hostlery or tavern
To shock with mirth a street so solemn;
But opposite the place of the cavern
They wrote the story on a column,
And on the great church-window painted
The same, to make the world acquainted
How their children were stolen away,
And there it stands to this very day.
And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there's a tribe
Of alien people who ascribe
The outlandish ways and dress
On which their neighbors lay such stress,
To their fathers and mothers having risen
Out of some subterraneous prison
Into which they were trepanned
Long time ago in a mighty band
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
But how or why, they don't understand.

XV

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers
Of scores out with all men – especially pipers!
And, whether they pipe us free from rats or from mice,
If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise!

Robert Browning [1812–1889]

The Home Book of Verse, V1

THE GLAD EVANGEL

A CAROL

He came all so still
Where His mother was,
As dew in April
That falleth on the grass.

He came all so still
Where His mother lay,
As dew in April
That falleth on the spray.

He came all so still
To His mother's bower,
As dew in April
That falleth on the flower.

Mother and maiden
Was never none but she!
Well might such a lady
God's mother be.

Unknown

"GOD REST YOU MERRY, GENTLEMEN"

God rest you merry, gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born upon this day,
To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray.
O tidings of comfort and joy!
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born on Christmas Day.

In Bethlehem, in Jewry,
This blessed babe was born,
And laid within a manger,
Upon this blessed morn;
The which His mother, Mary,
Nothing did take in scorn.

From God our Heavenly Father,
A blessed angel came;
And unto certain shepherds
Brought tidings of the same:
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by name.

"Fear not," then said the angel,
"Let nothing you affright,
This day is born a Saviour
Of virtue, power, and might,
So frequently to vanquish all
The friends of Satan quite."

The shepherds at these tidings
Rejoiced much in mind,
And left their flocks a-feeding
In tempest, storm, and wind,
And went to Bethlehem straightway,
This blessed babe to find.

But when to Bethlehem they came,
Whereat this infant lay,
They found Him in a manger,
Where oxen feed on hay,
His mother Mary kneeling,
Unto the Lord did pray.

Now to the Lord sing praises,

All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas
All others doth deface.

O tidings of comfort and joy!
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born in Christmas Day.

Unknown

"O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM"

O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee to-night.

For Christ is born of Mary,
And, gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King,
And peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still,
The dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem!
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in,
Be born in us to-day.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell;
Oh come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel!

Phillips Brooks [1835–1893]

A CHRISTMAS HYMN

Old Style: 1837

It was the calm and silent night!
Seven hundred years and fifty-three
Had Rome been growing up to might,
And now was Queen of land and sea.
No sound was heard of clashing wars;
Peace brooded o'er the hushed domain;
Apollo, Pallas, Jove and Mars,
Held undisturbed their ancient reign,
In the solemn midnight
Centuries ago.

'Twas in the calm and silent night!
The senator of haughty Rome
Impatient urged his chariot's flight,
From lordly revel rolling home.
Triumphal arches gleaming swell
His breast with thoughts of boundless sway;
What reaked the Roman what befell
A paltry province far away,
In the solemn midnight
Centuries ago!

Within that province far away
Went plodding home a weary boor:
A streak of light before him lay,
Fall'n through a half-shut stable door
Across his path. He passed – for naught
Told what was going on within;
How keen the stars! his only thought;
The air how calm and cold and thin,
In the solemn midnight
Centuries ago!

O strange indifference! – low and high
Drowns over common joys and cares:
The earth was still – but knew not why;
The world was listening – unawares.
How calm a moment may precede
One that shall thrill the world for ever!
To that still moment none would heed,
Man's doom was linked, no more to sever,
In the solemn midnight
Centuries ago.

It is the calm and solemn night!

A thousand bells ring out, and throw
Their joyous peals abroad, and smite
The darkness, charmed and holy now.
The night that erst no name had worn,
To it a happy name is given;
For in that stable lay new-born
The peaceful Prince of Earth and Heaven,
In the solemn midnight
Centuries ago.

Alfred Domett [1811–1887]

"WHILE SHEPHERDS WATCHED THEIR FLOCKS BY NIGHT"

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

"Fear not," said he, for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind;
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.

"To you, in David's town, this day
Is born, of David's line,
The Saviour, who is Christ the Lord,
And this shall be the sign:

"The heavenly babe you there shall find
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swaddling bands,
And in a manger laid."

Thus spake the seraph; and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels, praising God, who thus
Addressed their joyful song:

"All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace;
Good will henceforth from Heaven to men
Begin and never cease."

Nahum Tate [1652–1715]

CHRISTMAS CAROLS

It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth
To touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, good will to men
From heaven's all-gracious King" –
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its Babel-sounds
The blessed angels sing.

But with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they bring; –
Oh, hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing!

And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing; –
Oh, rest beside the weary road
And hear the angels sing!

For lo! the days are hastening on
By prophet bards foretold,
When with the ever circling years
Comes round the age of gold;
When Peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.

Edmund Hamilton Sears [1810–1876]

THE ANGELS

From "Flowers of Sion"

Run, shepherds, run where Bethlehem blest appears.
We bring the best of news; be not dismayed:
A Saviour there is born more old than years,
Amidst heaven's rolling heights this earth who stayed.
In a poor cottage inned, a virgin maid,
A weakling did him bear, who all upbears;
There is he poorly swaddled, in manger laid,
To whom too narrow swaddlings are our spheres:
Run, shepherds, run, and solemnize his birth.
This is that night – no, day, grown great with bliss,
In which the power of Satan broken is:
In heaven be glory, peace unto the earth!
Thus singing, through the air the angels swarm,
And cope of stars re-echoed the same.

William Drummond [1585–1649]

THE BURNING BABE

As I in hoary winter's night
Stood shivering in the snow,
Surprised I was with sudden heat
Which made my heart to glow;
And lifting up a fearful eye
To view what fire was near,
A pretty babe all burning bright
Did in the air appear;
Who, scorched with excessive heat,
Such floods of tears did shed,
As though His floods should quench His flames,
Which with His tears were bred:
"Alas!" quoth He, "but newly born
In fiery heats I fry,
Yet none approach to warm their hearts
Or feel my fire but I!

"My faultless breast the furnace is;
The fuel, wounding thorns;
Love is the fire, and sighs the smoke;
The ashes, shames and scorns;
The fuel Justice layeth on,
And Mercy blows the coals,
The metal in this furnace wrought
Are men's defiled souls:
For which, as now on fire I am
To work them to their good,
So will I melt into a bath,
To wash them in my blood."
With this He vanished out of sight
And swiftly shrunk away,
And straight I called unto mind
That it was Christmas Day.

Robert Southwell [1561?–1595]

TRYSTE NOEL

The Ox he openeth wide the Doore,
And from the Snowe he calls her inne,
And he hath seen her Smile therefor,
Our Ladye without Sinne.
Now soone from Sleep
A Starre shall leap,
And soone arrive both King and Hinde:
Amen, Amen:
But O, the Place co'd I but finde!

The Ox hath hushed his voyce and bent
Trew eyes of Pitty ore the Mow,
And on his lovelie Neck, forspent,
The Blessed layes her Browe.
Around her feet
Full Warme and Sweete
His bowerie Breath doth meeklie dwell:
Amen, Amen:
But sore am I with Vaine Travel!

The Ox is host in Judah stall
And Host of more than onelie one,
For close she gathereth withal
Our Lorde her littel Sonne.
Glad Hinde and King
Their Gyfte may bring,
But wo'd to-night my Teares were there,
Amen, Amen:
Between her Bosom and His hayre!

Louise Imogen Guiney [1861–1920]

CHRISTMAS CAROL

As Joseph was a-waukin',
He heard an angel sing,
"This night shall be the birthnight
Of Christ our heavenly King.

"His birth-bed shall be neither
In housen nor in hall,
Nor in the place of paradise,
But in the oxen's stall.

"He neither shall be rocked
In silver nor in gold,
But in the wooden manger
That lieth in the mould.

"He neither shall be washen
With white wine nor with red,
But with the fair spring water
That on you shall be shed.

"He neither shall be clothed
In purple nor in pall,
But in the fair, white linen
That usen babies all."

As Joseph was a-waukin',
Thus did the angel sing,
And Mary's son at midnight
Was born to be our King.

Then be you glad, good people,
At this time of the year;
And light you up your candles,
For His star it shineth clear.

Unknown

"BRIGHTEST AND BEST OF THE SONS OF THE MORNING"

Brightest and best of the Sons of the morning!
Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid!
Star of the East, the horizon adorning,
Guide where our Infant Redeemer is laid!

Cold on His cradle the dewdrops are shining,
Low lies His head with the beasts of the stall;
Angels adore Him in slumber reclining,
Maker and Monarch and Saviour of all!

Say, shall we yield Him, in costly devotion,
Odors of Edom and offerings divine?
Gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,
Myrrh from the forest, or gold from the mine?

Vainly we offer each ample oblation;
Vainly with gifts would His favor secure:
Richer by far is the heart's adoration;
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

Brightest and best of the Sons of the morning!
Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid!
Star of the East, the horizon adorning,
Guide where our Infant Redeemer is laid!

Reginald Heber [1783–1826]

CHRISTMAS BELLS

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said,
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep!
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow [1807–1882]

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,
His hair was like a light.
(O weary, weary were the world,
But here is all aright.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast,
His hair was like a star.
(O stern and cunning are the kings,
But here the true hearts are.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,
His hair was like a fire.
(O weary, weary is the world,
But here the world's desire.)

The Christ-child stood at Mary's knee,
His hair was like a crown,
And all the flowers looked up at Him,
And all the stars looked down.

Gilbert Keith Chesterton [1874-1936]

THE HOUSE OF CHRISTMAS

There fared a mother driven forth
Out of an inn to roam;
In the place where she was homeless
All men are at home.
The crazy stable close at hand,
With shaking timber and shifting sand,
Grew a stronger thing to abide and stand
Than the square stones of Rome.

For men are homesick in their homes,
And strangers under the sun,
And they lay their heads in a foreign land
Whenever the day is done.
Here we have battle and blazing eyes,
And chance and honor and high surprise,
But our homes are under miraculous skies
Where the yule tale was begun.

A Child in a foul stable,
Where the beasts feed and foam,
Only where He was homeless
Are you and I at home;
We have hands that fashion and heads that know,
But our hearts we lost – how long ago!
In a place no chart nor ship can show
Under the sky's dome.

This world is wild as an old wives' tale,
And strange the plain things are,
The earth is enough and the air is enough
For our wonder and our war;
But our rest is as far as the fire-drake swings
And our peace is put in impossible things
Where clashed and thundered unthinkable wings
Round an incredible star.

To an open house in the evening
Home shall men come,
To an older place than Eden
And a taller town than Rome.
To the end of the way of the wandering star,
To the things that cannot be and that are,
To the place where God was homeless
And all men are at home.

Gilbert Keith Chesterton [1874–1936]

THE FEAST OF THE SNOW

There is heard a hymn when the panes are dim,
And never before or again,
When the nights are strong with a darkness long,
And the dark is alive with rain.

Never we know but in sleet and snow
The place where the great fires are,
That the midst of earth is a raging mirth,
And the heart of the earth a star.

And at night we win to the ancient inn,
Where the Child in the frost is furred,
We follow the feet where all souls meet,
At the inn at the end of the world.

The gods lie dead where the leaves lie red,
For the flame of the sun is flown;
The gods lie cold where the leaves are gold,
And a Child comes forth alone.

Gilbert Keith Chesterton [1874–1936]

MARY'S BABY

Joseph, mild and noble, bent above the straw:
A pale girl, a frail girl, suffering he saw;
"O my Love, my Mary, my bride, I pity thee!"
"Nay, Dear," said Mary, "all is well with me!"
"Baby, my baby, O my babe," she sang.
Suddenly the golden night all with music rang.

Angels leading shepherds, shepherds leading sheep:
The silence of worship broke the mother's sleep.
All the meek and lowly of all the world were there;
Smiling, she showed them that her Child was fair,
"Baby, my baby," kissing Him she said.
Suddenly a flaming star through the heavens sped.

Three old men and weary knelt them side by side,
The world's wealth forswearing, majesty and pride;
Worldly might and wisdom before the Babe bent low:
Weeping, maid Mary said, "I love Him so!"
"Baby, my baby," and the Baby slept.
Suddenly on Calvary all the olives wept.

Shaemas OSheel [1886–

GATES AND DOORS

A Ballad of Christmas Eve

There was a gentle hostler
(And blessed be his name!)
He opened up the stable
The night Our Lady came.
Our Lady and St. Joseph,
He gave them food and bed,
And Jesus Christ has given him
A glory round his head.

So let the gate swing open
However poor the yard,
Lest weary People visit you
And find their Passage barred.
Unlatch the door at midnight
And let your lantern's glow
Shine out to guide the traveler's feet
To you across the snow.

There was a courteous hostler
(He is in Heaven to-night)
He held Our Lady's bridle
And helped her to alight.
He spread clean straw before her
Whereon she might lie down,
And Jesus Christ has given him
An everlasting crown.

Unlock the door this evening
And let your gate swing wide,
Let all who ask for shelter
Come speedily inside.
What if your yard be narrow?
What if your house be small?
There is a Guest is coming
Will glorify it all.

There was a joyous hostler
Who knelt on Christmas morn
Beside the radiant manger
Wherein his Lord was born.
His heart was full of laughter,
His soul was full of bliss
When Jesus, on His Mother's lap,
Gave him His hand to kiss.

Unbar your heart this evening
And keep no stranger out,
Take from your soul's great portal
The barrier of doubt.
To humble folk and weary
Give hearty welcoming,
Your breast shall be to-morrow
The cradle of a King.

Joyce Kilmer [1886–1918]

THE THREE KINGS

Three Kings came riding from far away,
Melchior and Gaspar and Baltasar;
Three Wise Men out of the East were they,
And they travelled by night and they slept by day,
For their guide was a beautiful, wonderful star.

The star was so beautiful, large and clear,
That all the other stars of the sky
Became a white mist in the atmosphere;
And by this they knew that the coming was near
Of the Prince foretold in the prophecy.

Three caskets they bore on their saddle-bows,
Three caskets of gold with golden keys;
Their robes were of crimson silk, with rows
Of bells and pomegranates and furbelows,
Their turbans like blossoming almond-trees.

And so the Three Kings rode into the West,
Through the dusk of night, over hill and dell,
And sometimes they nodded with beard on breast,
And sometimes talked, as they paused to rest,
With the people they met at some wayside well.

"Of the child that is born," said Baltasar,
"Good people, I pray you, tell us the news,
For we in the East have seen his star,
And have ridden fast, and have ridden far,
To find and worship the King of the Jews."

And the people answered, "You ask in vain;
We know of no king but Herod the Great!"
They thought the Wise Men were men insane,
As they spurred their horses across the plain
Like riders in haste, and who cannot wait.

And when they came to Jerusalem,
Herod the Great, who had heard this thing,
Sent for the Wise Men and questioned them;
And said, "Go down unto Bethlehem,
And bring me tidings of this new king."

So they rode away, and the star stood still,
The only one in the gray of morn;
Yes, it stopped, – it stood still of its own free will,
Right over Bethlehem on the hill,

The city of David, where Christ was born.

And the Three Kings rode through the gate and the guard,
Through the silent street, till their horses turned
And neighed as they entered the great inn-yard;
But the windows were closed, and the doors were barred,
And only a light in the stable burned.

And cradled there in the scented hay,
In the air made sweet by the breath of kine,
The little child in the manger lay,
The Child that would be King one day
Of a kingdom not human, but divine.

His mother, Mary of Nazareth,
Sat watching beside his place of rest,
Watching the even flow of his breath,
For the joy of life and the terror of death
Were mingled together in her breast.

They laid their offerings at his feet:
The gold was their tribute to a King;
The frankincense, with its odor sweet,
Was for the Priest, the Paraclete;
The myrrh for the body's burying.

And the mother wondered and bowed her head,
And sat as still as a statue of stone;
Her heart was troubled yet comforted,
Remembering what the Angel had said
Of an endless reign and of David's throne.

Then the Kings rode out of the city gate,
With a clatter of hoofs in proud array;
But they went not back to Herod the Great,
For they knew his malice and feared his hate,
And returned to their homes by another way.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow [1807–1882]

LULLABY IN BETHLEHEM

There hath come an host to see Thee,
Baby dear,
Bearded men with eyes of flame
And lips of fear,
For the heavens, they say, have broken
Into blinding gulfs of glory,
And the Lord, they say, hath spoken
In a little wondrous story,
Baby dear.

There have come three kings to greet Thee,
Baby dear,
Crowned with gold, and clad in purple,
They draw near.
They have brought rare silks to bind Thee,
At Thy feet, behold, they spread them,
From their thrones they sprang to find Thee,
And a blazing star hath led them,
Baby dear.

I have neither jade nor jasper,
Baby dear,
Thou art all my hope and glory,
And my fear,
Yet for all the gems that strew Thee,
And the costly gowns that fold Thee,
Yea, though all the world should woo Thee,
Thou art mine – and fast I hold Thee,
Baby dear.

Henry Howarth Bashford [1880–

A CHILD'S SONG OF CHRISTMAS

My counterpane is soft as silk,
My blankets white as creamy milk.
The hay was soft to Him, I know,
Our little Lord of long ago.

Above the roofs the pigeons fly
In silver wheels across the sky.
The stable—doves they cooed to them,
Mary and Christ in Bethlehem.

Bright shines the sun across the drifts,
And bright upon my Christmas gifts.
They brought Him incense, myrrh, and gold,
Our little Lord who lived of old.

Oh, soft and clear our mother sings
Of Christmas joys and Christmas things.
God's holy angels sang to them,
Mary and Christ in Bethlehem.

Our hearts they hold all Christmas dear,
And earth seems sweet and heaven seems near,
Oh, heaven was in His sight, I know,
That little Child of long ago.

Marjorie L. C. Pickthall [1883–1922]

JEST 'FORE CHRISTMAS

Father calls me William, sister calls me Will,
Mother calls me Willie, but the fellers call me Bill!
Mighty glad I ain't a girl – ruther be a boy,
Without them sashes, curls, an' things that's worn by Fauntleroy!
Love to chawnk green apples an' go swimmin' in the lake –
Hate to take the castor-ile they give for belly-ache!
'Most all the time, the whole year round, there ain't no flies on me,
But jest 'fore Christmas I'm as good as I kin be!

Got a yellor dog named Sport, sick him on the cat;
First thing she knows she doesn't know where she is at!
Got a clipper sled, an' when us kids goes out to slide,
'Long comes the grocery cart an' we all hook a ride!
But sometimes when the grocery man is worried an' cross,
He reaches at us with his whip, an' larrups up his hoss,
An' then I laff an' holler, "Oh, ye never teched me!"
But jest 'fore Christmas I'm as good as I kin be!

Gran'ma says she hopes that when I git to be a man,
I'll be a missionarer like her oldest brother, Dan,
As was et up by the cannibuls that lives in Ceylon's Isle,
Where every prospeck pleases, an' only man is vile!
But gran'ma she has never been to see a Wild West show,
Nor read the Life of Daniel Boone, or else I guess she'd know
That Buff'lo Bill and cow-boys is good enough for me!
Excep' jest 'fore Christmas, when I'm good as I kin be!

And then old Sport he hangs around, so solemn-like an' still,
His eyes they keep a-sayin': "What's the matter, little Bill?"
The old cat sneaks down off her perch an' wonders what's become
Of them two enemies of hern that used to make things hum!
But I am so perlite an' 'tend so earnestly to biz,
That mother says to father: "How improved our Willie is!"
But father, havin' been a boy hisself, suspicions me
When jest 'fore Christmas, I'm as good as I kin be!

For Christmas, with its lots an' lots of candies, cakes an' toys,
Was made, they say, for proper kids an' not for naughty boys;
So wash yer face an' bresh yer hair, an' mind yer p's an' q's,
An' don't bust out yer pantaloons, an' don't wear out yer shoes;
Say "Yessum" to the ladies, an' "Yessur" to the men,
An' when they's company, don't pass yer plate for pie again;
But, thinking of the things yer'd like to see upon that tree,
Jest 'fore Christmas be as good as yer kin be!

Eugene Field [1850–1895]

A VTSTT FROM ST. NICHOLAS

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap,
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below,
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name;
"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! on Cupid! on, Donner and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas too.
And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.
His eyes – how they twinkled! his dimples how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow;
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath;
He had a broad face and a little round belly,
That shook, when he laughed, like a bowlful of jelly.
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;

A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night."

Clement Clarke Moore [1779–1863]

CEREMONIES FOR CHRISTMAS

Come, bring with a noise,
My merry, merry boys,
The Christmas log to the firing;
While my good dame, she
Bids ye all be free;
And drink to your hearts' desiring.

With the last year's brand
Light the new block, and
For good success in his spending,
On your psaltries play,
That sweet luck may
Come while the log is a-tending.

Drink now the strong beer,
Cut the white loaf here,
The while the meat is a-shredding;
For the rare mince-pie
And the plums stand by
To fill the paste that's a-kneading.

Robert Herrick [1591–1674]

ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

This is the month, and this the happy morn
Wherein the Son of Heaven's Eternal King,
Of wedded maid and virgin mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring;
For so the holy sages once did sing
That he our deadly forfeit should release,
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty
Wherewith he went at Heaven's high council—ta
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside; and, here with us to be,
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

Say, Heavenly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
Afford a present to the Infant God?
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain
To welcome him to this his new abode,
Now while the heaven, by the sun's team untrod,
Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?

See how from far, upon the eastern road,
The star-led wizards haste with odors sweet!
O run, prevent them with thy humble ode
And lay it lowly at his blessed feet;
Have thou the honor first thy Lord to greet,
And join thy voice unto the angel choir
From out his secret altar touched with hallowed fire.

THE HYMN

It was the winter wild
While the heaven-born Child
All meanly wrapped in the rude manger lies;
Nature in awe to Him
Had doffed her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathize:
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the sun, her lusty paramour.

Only with speeches fair
She woos the gentle air
To hide her guilty front with innocent snow;
And on her naked shame,

Pollute with sinful blame,
The saintly veil of maiden white to throw;
Confounded, that her Maker's eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

But he, her fears to cease,
Sent down the meek-eyed Peace;
She, crowned with olive green, came softly sliding
Down through the turning sphere,
His ready harbinger,
With turtle wing and amorous clouds dividing;
And waving wide her myrtle wand,
She strikes a universal peace through sea and land.

No war, or battle's sound
Was heard the world around:
The idle spear and shield were high uphung;
The hooked chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood;
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng;
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovereign Lord was by.

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon the earth began:
The winds, with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kissed,
Whispering new joys to the mild ocean –
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

The stars, with deep amaze,
Stand fixed in steadfast gaze,
Bending one way their precious influence;
And will not take their flight
For all the morning light,
Or Lucifer that often warned them thence;
But in their glimmering orbs did glow
Until their Lord himself bespake, and bid them go.

And though the shady gloom
Had given day her room,
The sun himself withheld his wonted speed,
And hid his head for shame,
As his inferior flame
The new-enlightened world no more should need;
He saw a greater Sun appear
Than his bright throne, or burning axletree, could bear.

The shepherds on the lawn

Or ere the point of dawn
Sat simply chatting in a rustic row;
Full little thought they then
That the mighty Pan
Was kindly come to live with them below;
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

When such music sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet
As never was by mortal finger strook –
Divinely–warbled voice
Answering the stringed noise,
As all their souls in blissful rapture took:
The air, such pleasure loth to lose,
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close.

Nature, that heard such sound
Beneath the hollow round
Of Cynthia's seat the airy region thrilling,
Now was almost won
To think her part was done,
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling;
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all heaven and earth in happier union.

At last surrounds their sight
A globe of circular light
That with long beams the shamefaced night arrayed;
The helmed Cherubim
And sworded Seraphim
Are seen in glittering ranks with wings displayed,
Harping in loud and solemn choir
With unexpressive notes, to Heaven's new–born Heir.

Such music (as 'tis said)
Before was never made
But when of old the sons of morning sung,
While the Creator great
His constellations set
And the well–balanced world on hinges hung;
And cast the dark foundations deep,
And bid the weltering waves their oozy channel keep.

Ring out, ye crystal spheres!
Once bless our human ears,
If ye have power to touch our senses so;
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time;
And let the bass of Heaven's deep organ blow;
And with your ninefold harmony

Make up full consort to the angelic symphony.

For if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long,
Time will run back, and fetch the age of gold;
And speckled vanity
Will sicken soon and die,
And leprous sin will melt from earthly mould;
And Hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day.

Yea, Truth and Justice then
Will down return to men,
Orbed in a rainbow; and, like glories wearing,
Mercy will sit between
Throned in celestial sheen,
With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering;
And Heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace hall.

But wisest Fate says No;
This must not yet be so;
The Babe yet lies in smiling infancy
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss;
So both himself and us to glorify:
Yet first, to those ychained in sleep
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the deep;

With such a horrid clang
As on Mount Sinai rang
While the red fire and smouldering clouds outbrake:
The aged Earth aghast
With terror of that blast
Shall from the surface to the centre shake,
When, at the world's last session,
The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread His throne.

And then at last our bliss
Full and perfect is,
But now begins; for from this happy day
The old Dragon under ground,
In straiter limits bound,
Not half so far casts his usurped sway;
And, wroth to see his kingdom fail,
Swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail.

The oracles are dumb;
No voice or hideous hum
Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving.
Apollo from his shrine

Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving:
No nightly trance or breathed spell
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.

The lonely mountains o'er
And the resounding shore
A voice of weeping heard, and loud lament;
From haunted spring and dale
Edged with poplar pale
The parting Genius is with sighing sent;
With flower-inwoven tresses torn
The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

In consecrated earth
And on the holy hearth
The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint;
In urns, and altars round
A drear and dying sound
Affrights the Flamens at their service quaint;
And the chill marble seems to sweat,
While each peculiar Power foregoes his wonted seat.

Peor and Baalim
Forsake their temples dim,
With that twice-battered god of Palestine;
And mooned Ashtaroth
Heaven's queen and mother both,
Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine;
The Lybic Hammon shrinks his horn:
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz mourn.

And sullen Moloch, fled,
Hath left in shadows dread
His burning idol all of blackest hue;
In vain with cymbals' ring
They call the grisly king,
In dismal dance about the furnace blue;
The brutish gods of Nile as fast,
Isis, and Orus, and the dog Anubis, haste.

Nor is Osiris seen
In Memphian grove, or green,
Trampling the unshowered grass with lowings loud:
Nor can he be at rest
Within his sacred chest;
Naught but profoundest Hell can be his shroud;
In vain with timbrelled anthems dark
The sable stoled sorcerers bear his worshiped ark.

He feels from Juda's land

The dreaded Infant's hand;
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eye;
Nor all the gods beside
Longer dare abide
Nor Typhon huge ending in snaky twine:
Our Babe, to show his Godhead true,
Can in His swaddling bands control the damned crew.

So, when the sun in bed
Curtained with cloudy red
Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,
The flocking shadows pale
Troop to the infernal jail,
Each fettered ghost slips to his several grave:
And the yellow-skirted fays
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-loved maze.

But see! the Virgin blest
Hath laid her Babe to rest;
Time is, our tedious song should here have ending:
Heaven's youngest teemed star
Hath fixed her polished car,
Her sleeping Lord with hand-maid lamp attending:
And all about the courtly stable
Bright-harnessed Angels sit in order serviceable.

John Milton [1608–1674]

FAIRYLAND

THE FAIRY BOOK

In summer, when the grass is thick, if mother has the time,
She shows me with her pencil how a poet makes a rhyme,
And often she is sweet enough to choose a leafy nook,
Where I cuddle up so closely when she reads the Fairybook.

In winter, when the corn's asleep, and birds are not in song,
And crocuses and violets have been away too long,
Dear mother puts her thimble by in answer to my look,
And I cuddle up so closely when she reads the Fairybook.

And mother tells the servants that of course they must contrive
To manage all the household things from four till half-past five,
For we really cannot suffer interruption from the cook,
When we cuddle close together with the happy Fairybook.

Norman Gale [1862-

FAIRY SONGS

I

From "A Midsummer-Night's Dream"

Over hill, over dale,
Through bush, through brier,
Over park, over pale,
Through flood, through fire,
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green:
The cowslips tall her pensioners be;
In their gold coats spots you see;
Those be rubies, fairy favors,
In those freckles live their savors:
I must go seek some dew-drops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.

II

From "A Midsummer-Night's Dream"

You spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong;
Come not near our fairy queen.

Philomel, with melody,
Sing in our sweet lullaby;
Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby!
Never harm,
Nor spell nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh;
So, good night, with lullaby.

Weaving spiders, come not here;
Hence, you long-legged spinners, hence!
Beetles black, approach not near;
Worm nor snail, do no offence.

Philomel, with melody,
Sing in our sweet lullaby;
Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby!
Never harm,
Nor spell nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh;
So, good-night, with lullaby.

III

From "The Tempest"

Come unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands:
Court'sied when you have, and kissed, –
The wild waves whist, –
Foot it featly here and there;
And, sweet sprites, the burthen bear.
Hark, hark!
Bow, wow,
The watch–dogs bark:
Bow, wow.
Hark, hark! I hear
The strain of strutting chanticleer
Cry, Cock–a–diddle–dow!

IV

From "The Tempest"

Where the bee sucks, there suck I:
In a cowslip's bell I lie;
There I couch when owls do cry.
On the bat's back I do fly
After summer merrily:
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

William Shakespeare [1564–1616]

QUEEN MAB

From "The Satyr"

This is Mab, the Mistress-Fairy,
That doth nightly rob the dairy
And can hurt or help the churning,
As she please without discerning.

She that pinches country wenches
If they rub not clean their benches,
And with sharper nails remembers
When they rake not up their embers:
But if so they chance to feast her,
In a shoe she drops a tester.

This is she that empties cradles,
Takes out children, puts in ladles:
Trains forth old wives in their slumber
With a sieve the holes to number;
And then leads them from her burrows,
Home through ponds and water-furrows.

She can start our Franklins' daughters,
In their sleep, with shrieks and laughters:
And on sweet Saint Anna's night
Feed them with a promised sight,
Some of husbands, some of lovers,
Which an empty dream discovers.

Ben Jonson [1573?-1637]

THE ELF AND THE DORMOUSE

Under a toadstool crept a wee Elf,
Out of the rain, to shelter himself.

Under the toadstool sound asleep,
Sat a big Dormouse all in a heap.

Trembled the wee Elf, frightened, and yet
Fearing to fly away lest he get wet.

To the next shelter – maybe a mile!
Sudden the wee Elf smiled a wee smile,

Tugged till the toadstool toppled in two.
Holding it over him, gayly he flew.

Soon he was safe home, dry as could be.
Soon woke the Dormouse – "Good gracious me!

"Where is my toadstool?" loud he lamented.
– And that's how umbrellas first were invented.

Oliver Herford [1863–1935]

"OH! WHERE DO FAIRIES HIDE THEIR HEADS?"

Oh! where do fairies hide their heads,
When snow lies on the hills,
When frost has spoiled their mossy beds,
And crystallized their rills?
Beneath the moon they cannot trip
In circles o'er the plain;
And draughts of dew they cannot sip,
Till green leaves come again.

Perhaps, in small, blue diving-bells
They plunge beneath the waves,
Inhabiting the wreathed shells
That lie in coral caves.
Perhaps, in red Vesuvius
Carousals they maintain;
And cheer their little spirits thus,
Till green leaves come again.

When they return, there will be mirth
And music in the air.
And fairy wings upon the earth,
And mischief everywhere.
The maids, to keep the elves aloof,
Will bar the doors in vain;
No key-hole will he fairy-proof
When green leaves come again.

Thomas Haynes Bayly [1797–1839]

FAIRY SONG

From "Amyntas"

We the Fairies, blithe and antic,
Of dimensions not gigantic,
Though the moonshine mostly keep us,
Oft in orchards frisk and peep us.

Stolen sweets are always sweeter,
Stolen kisses much completer,
Stolen looks are nice in chapels,
Stolen, stolen be your apples.

When to bed the world is bobbing,
Then's the time for orchard-robbing;
Yet the fruit were scarce worth peeling
Were it not for stealing, stealing.

Translated by Leigh Hunt from the Latin of Thomas Randolph
[1605-1635]

DREAM SONG

I come from woods enchanted,
Starlit and pixey-haunted,
Where 'twixt the bracken and the trees
The goblins lie and take their ease
By winter moods undaunted.

There down the golden gravel
The laughing rivers travel;
Elves wake at nights and whisper low
Between the bracken and the snow
Their dreamings to unravel.

Twisted and lank and hairy,
With wanton eyes and wary,
They stretch and chuckle in the wind,
For one has found a mermaid kind,
And one has kissed a fairy.

They know no melancholy,
But fashion crowns of holly,
And gather sleep within the brake
To deck a kingdom when they wake,
And bless the dreamer's folly.

Ah! would that I might follow
The servants of Apollo!
But it is sweet to heap the hours
With quiet dreams and poppy-flowers,
Down in the pixies' hollow.

Richard Middleton [1882-1911]

FAIRY SONG

Shed no tear! O, shed no tear!
The flower will bloom another year.
Weep no more! O, weep no more!
Young buds sleep in the root's white core.
Dry your eyes! O, dry your eyes!
For I was taught in Paradise
To ease my breast of melodies, –
Shed no tear.

Overhead! look overhead!
'Mong the blossoms white and red, –
Look up, look up! I flutter now
On this flush pomegranate bough.
See me! 'tis this silvery bill
Ever cures the good man's ill, –
Shed no tear! O, shed no tear!
The flower will bloom another year.
Adieu, adieu – I fly – adieu!
I vanish in the heaven's blue, –
Adieu, adieu!

John Keats [1795–1821]

QUEEN MAB

A little fairy comes at night,
Her eyes are blue, her hair is brown,
With silver spots upon her wings,
And from the moon she flutters down.

She has a little silver wand,
And when a good child goes to bed
She waves her hand from right to left,
And makes a circle round its head.

And then it dreams of pleasant things,
Of fountains filled with fairy fish,
And trees that bear delicious fruit,
And bow their branches at a wish:

Of arbors filled with dainty scents
From lovely flowers that never fade;
Bright flies that glitter in the sun,
And glow-worms shining in the shade:

And talking birds with gifted tongues,
For singing songs and telling tales,
And pretty dwarfs to show the way
Through fairy hills and fairy dales.

But when a bad child goes to bed,
From left to right she weaves her rings,
And then it dreams all through the night
Of only ugly horrid things!

Then lions come with glaring eyes,
And tigers growl, a dreadful noise,
And ogres draw their cruel knives,
To shed the blood of girls and boys.

Then stormy waves rush on to drown,
Or raging flames come scorching round,
Fierce dragons hover in the air,
And serpents crawl along the ground.

Then wicked children wake and weep,
And wish the long black gloom away;
But good ones love the dark, and find
The night as pleasant as the day.

Thomas Hood [1799–1845]

THE FAIRIES OF THE CALDON-LOW

A Midsummer Legend

"And where have you been, my Mary,
And where have you been from me?"
"I've been to the top of the Caldon-Low,
The midsummer night to see!"

"And what did you see, my Mary,
All up on the Caldon-Low?"
"I saw the glad sunshine come down,
And I saw the merry winds blow."

"And what did you hear, my Mary,
All up on the Caldon-Hill?"
"I heard the drops of the water made,
And the ears of the green corn fill."

"Oh, tell me all, my Mary –
All – all that ever you know;
For you must have seen the fairies
Last night on the Caldon-Low!"

"Then take me on your knee, mother,
And listen, mother of mine:
A hundred fairies danced last night,
And the harpers they were nine.

"And their harp-strings rang so merrily
To their dancing feet so small;
But, oh! the words of their talking
Were merrier far than all!"

"And what were the words, my Mary,
That you did hear them say?"
"I'll tell you all, my mother,
But let me have my way.

"Some of them played with the water,
And rolled it down the hill;
'And this,' they said, 'shall speedily turn
The poor old miller's mill.

"For there has been no water
Ever since the first of May;
And a busy man will the miller be
At the dawning of the day!

"Oh! the miller, how he will laugh,
When he sees the mill-dam rise!
The jolly old miller, how he will laugh,
Till the tears fill both his eyes!"

"And some they seized the little winds,
That sounded over the hill,
And each put a horn into his mouth,
And blew both loud and shrill:

"And there,' said they, 'the merry winds go
Away from every horn;
And they shall clear the mildew dank
From the blind old widow's corn:

"Oh, the poor blind widow –
Though she has been blind so long,
She'll be merry enough when the mildew's gone,
And the corn stands tall and strong!"

"And some they brought the brown linseed
And flung it down the Low:
'And this,' said they, 'by the sunrise
In the weaver's croft shall grow!

"Oh, the poor lame weaver!
How will he laugh outright
When he sees his dwindling flax-field
All full of flowers by night!"

"And then outspoke a brownie,
With a long beard on his chin:
'I have spun up all the tow,' said he,
'And I want some more to spin.

"I've spun a piece of hempen cloth
And I want to spin another –
A little sheet for Mary's bed,
And an apron for her mother!"

"With that I could not help but laugh,
And I laughed out loud and free;
And then on the top of the Caldun-Low
There was no one left but me.

"And all on the top of the Caldun-Low
The mists were cold and gray,
And nothing I saw but the mossy stones
That round about me lay.

"But, coming down from the hill-top,

I heard, afar below,
How busy the jolly miller was,
And how merry the wheel did go!

"And I peeped into the widow's field,
And, sure enough, was seen
The yellow ears of the mildewed corn
All standing stout and green.

"And down the weaver's croft I stole,
To see if the flax were sprung;
And I met the weaver at his gate
With the good news on his tongue!

"Now, this is all I heard, mother,
And all that I did see;
So, prithee, make my bed, mother,
For I'm tired as I can be!"

Mary Howitt [1799–1888]

THE FAIRIES

Up the airy mountain,
Down the rushy glen,
We daren't go a-hunting
For fear of little men;
Wee folk, good folk,
Trooping all together;
Green jacket, red cap,
And white owl's feather!

Down along the rocky shore
Some make their home,
They live on crispy pancakes
Of yellow tide-foam;
Some in the reeds
Of the black mountain lake,
With frogs for their watch-dogs,
All night awake.

High on the hill-top
The old King sits;
He is now so old and gray
He's nigh lost his wits.
With a bridge of white mist
Columbkil he crosses,
On his stately journeys
From Slieveleague to Rosses;
Or going up with music
On cold starry nights
To sup with the Queen
Of the gay Northern Lights.

They stole little Bridget
For seven years long;
When she came down again
Her friends were all gone.
They took her lightly back,
Between the night and morrow,
They thought that she was fast asleep,
But she was dead with sorrow.
They have kept her ever since
Deep within the lake,
On a bed of flag-leaves,

Watching till she wake.

By the craggy hill-side,

Through the mosses bare,
They have planted thorn-trees
For pleasure here and there.
If any man so daring
As dig them up in spite,
He shall find their sharpest thorns
In his bed at night.

Up the airy mountain,
Down the rushy glen,
We daren't go a-hunting
For fear of little men;
Wee folk, good folk,
Trooping all together;
Green jacket, red cap,
And white owl's feather!

William Allingham [1824–1889]

THE FAIRY THRALL

On gossamer nights when the moon is low,
And stars in the mist are hiding,
Over the hill where the foxgloves grow
You may see the fairies riding.
Kling! Klang! Kling!
Their stirrups and their bridles ring,
And their horns are loud and their bugles blow,
When the moon is low.

They sweep through the night like a whistling wind,
They pass and have left no traces;
But one of them lingers far behind
The flight of the fairy faces.
She makes no moan,
She sorrows in the dark alone,
She wails for the love of human kind,
Like a whistling wind.

"Ah! why did I roam where the elfins ride,
Their glimmering steps to follow?
They bore me far from my loved one's side,
To wander o'er hill and hollow.
Kling! Klang! Kling!
Their stirrups and their bridles ring,
But my heart is cold in the cold night-tide,
Where the elfins ride."

Mary C. G. Byron [1861–

FAREWELL TO THE FAIRIES

Farewell, rewards and fairies!
Good housewives now may say,
For now foul sluts in dairies
Do fare as well as they.
And though they sweep their hearths no less
Than maids were wont to do,
Yet who of late, for cleanliness,
Finds sixpence in her shoe?

Lament, lament, old abbeyes,
The fairies' lost command!
They did but change priests' babies,
But some have changed your land;
And all your children sprung from thence,
Are now grown Puritanes;
Who live as changelings ever since,
For love of your demains.

At morning and at evening both
You merry were and glad;
So little care of sleep or sloth
These pretty ladies had;
When Tom came home from labor,
Or Ciss to milking rose,
Then merrily merrily went their tabor
And nimbly went their toes.

Witness those rings and roundelays
Of theirs, which yet remain,
Were footed in Queen Mary's days
On many a grassy plain;
But since of late, Elizabeth,
And later, James came in,
They never danced on any heath
As when the time hath been.

By which we note the fairies
Were of the old profession;
Their songs were Ave-Maries,
Their dances were procession.
But now, alas! they all are dead,
Or gone beyond the seas;
Or farther for religion fled;
Or else they take their ease.

A tell-tale in their company

They never could endure;
And whoso kept not secretly
Their mirth, was punished sure;
It was a just and Christian deed
To pinch such black and blue:
Oh, how the Commonwealth doth need
Such justices as you!

Richard Corbet [1582–1635]

THE FAIRY FOLK

Come cuddle close in daddy's coat
Beside the fire so bright,
And hear about the fairy folk
That wander in the night.
For when the stars are shining clear
And all the world is still,
They float across the silver moon
From hill to cloudy hill.

Their caps of red, their cloaks of green,
Are hung with silver bells,
And when they're shaken with the wind
Their merry ringing swells.
And riding on the crimson moth,
With black spots on her wings,
They guide them down the purple sky
With golden bridle rings.

They love to visit girls and boys
To see how sweet they sleep,
To stand beside their cosy cots
And at their faces peep.
For in the whole of fairy-land
They have no finer sight
Than little children sleeping sound
With faces rosy bright.

On tip-toe crowding round their heads,
When bright the moonlight beams,
They whisper little tender words
That fill their minds with dreams;
And when they see a sunny smile,
With lightest finger tips
They lay a hundred kisses sweet
Upon the ruddy lips.

And then the little spotted moths
Spread out their crimson wings,
And bear away the fairy crowd
With shaking bridle rings.
Come, bairnies, hide in daddy's coat,
Beside the fire so bright –
Perhaps the little fairy folk
Will visit you to-night.

Robert Bird [1867–

THE FAIRY BOOK

When Mother takes the Fairy Book
And we curl up to hear,
'Tis "All aboard for Fairyland!"
Which seems to be so near.

For soon we reach the pleasant place
Of Once Upon a Time,
Where birdies sing the hour of day,
And flowers talk in rhyme;

Where Bobby is a velvet Prince,
And where I am a Queen;
Where one can talk with animals,
And walk about unseen;

Where Little People live in nuts,
And ride on butterflies,
And wonders kindly come to pass
Before your very eyes;

Where candy grows on every bush,
And playthings on the trees,
And visitors pick basketfuls
As often as they please.

It is the nicest time of day –
Though Bedtime is so near, –
When Mother takes the Fairy Book
And we curl up to hear.

Abbie Farwell Brown [1875–1927]

THE VISITOR

The white goat Amaryllis,
She wandered at her will
At time of daffodillies
Afar and up the hill:
We hunted and we holloa'd
And back she came at dawn,
But what d'you think had followed? –
A little, pagan Faun!

His face was like a berry.
His ears were high and pricked:
Tip–tap – his hoofs came merry
As up the path he clicked;
A junket for his winning
We set in dairy delf;
He eat it – peart and grinning
As Christian as yourself!

He stayed about the steading
A fortnight, say, or more;
A blanket for his bedding
We spread beside the door;
And when the cocks crowed clearly
Before the dawn was ripe,
He'd call the milkmaids cheerly
Upon a reedy pipe!

That fortnight of his staying
The work went smooth as silk:
The hens were all in laying,
The cows were all in milk;
And then – and then one morning
The maids woke up at day
Without his oaten warning, –
And found he'd gone away.

He left no trace behind him;
But still the milkmaids deem
That they, perhaps, may find him
With butter and with cream:
Beside the door they set them
In bowl and golden pat,
But no one comes to get them –
Unless, maybe, the cat.

The white goat Amaryllis,

She wanders at her will
At time of daffodillies,
Away up Woolcombe hill;
She stays until the morrow,
Then back she comes at dawn;
But never – to our sorrow –
The little, pagan Faun.

Patrick R. Chalmers [18

THE LITTLE ELF

I met a little Elf–man, once,
Down where the lilies blow.
I asked him why he was so small,
And why he didn't grow.
He slightly frowned, and with his eye
He looked me through and through.
"I'm quite as big for me," said he,
"As you are big for you."

John Kendrick Bangs [1862–1922]

THE SATYRS AND THE MOON

Within the wood behind the hill
The moon got tangled in the trees.
Her splendor made the branches thrill
And thrilled the breeze.

The satyrs in the grotto bent
Their heads to see the wondrous sight.
"It is a god in banishment
That stirs the night."

The little satyr looked and guessed:
"It is an apple that one sees,
Brought from that garden of the West –
Hesperides."

"It is a cyclops' glaring eye."
"A temple dome from Babylon."
"A Titan's cup of ivory."
"A little sun."

The tiny satyr jumped for joy,
And kicked hoofs in utmost glee.
"It is a wondrous silver toy –
Bring it to me!"

A great wind whistled through the blue
And caught the moon and tossed it high;
A bubble of pale fire it flew
Across the sky.

The satyrs gasped and looked and smiled,
And wagged their heads from side to side,
Except their shaggy little child,
Who cried and cried.

Herbert S. Gorman [1893–

The Home Book of Verse, V1

THE CHILDREN

THE CHILDREN

When the lessons and tasks are all ended,
And the school for the day is dismissed,
The little ones gather around me,
To bid me good night and be kissed;
Oh, the little white arms that encircle
My neck in their tender embrace!
Oh, the smiles that are halos of heaven,
Shedding sunshine of love on my face!

And when they are gone, I sit dreaming
Of my childhood too lovely to last, –
Of joy that my heart will remember,
While it wakes to the pulse of the past,
Ere the world and its wickedness made me
A partner of sorrow and sin,
When the glory of God was about me,
And the glory of gladness within.

All my heart grows as weak as a woman's,
And the fountain of feeling will flow,
When I think of the paths steep and stony,
Where the feet of the dear ones must go, –
Of the mountains of sin hanging o'er them,
Of the tempest of fate blowing wild; –
Oh, there's nothing on earth half so holy
As the innocent heart of a child!

They are idols of hearts and of households;
They are angels of God in disguise;
His sunlight still sleeps in their tresses,
His glory still shines in their eyes;
Those truants from home and from heaven, –
They have made me more manly and mild;
And I know now how Jesus could liken
The kingdom of God to a child.

I ask not a life for the dear ones,
All radiant, as others have done,
But that life may have just enough shadow
To temper the glare of the sun;
I would pray God to guard them from evil,
But my prayer would bound back to myself; –
Ah! a seraph may pray for a sinner,
But a sinner must pray for himself.

The twig is so easily bended,

I have banished the rule and the rod
I have taught them the goodness of knowledge,
They have taught me the goodness of God:
My heart is the dungeon of darkness
Where I shut them for breaking a rule;
My frown is sufficient correction;
My love is the law of the school.

I shall leave the old house in the autumn,
To traverse its threshold no more;
Ah, how I shall sigh for the dear ones
That meet me each morn at the door!
I shall miss the "good nights" and the kisses,
And the gush of their innocent glee,
The group on the green, and the flowers
That are brought every morning for me.

I shall miss them at morn and at even,
Their song in the school and the street;
I shall miss the low hum of their voices,
And the tread of their delicate feet.
When the lessons of life are all ended,
And death says: "The school is dismissed!"
May the little ones gather around me,
To bid me good night and be kissed!

Charles Monroe Dickinson [1842–1924]

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

Between the dark and the daylight,
When the night is beginning to lower,
Comes a pause in the day's occupations,
That is known as the Children's Hour.

I hear in the chamber above me
The patter of little feet,
The sound of a door that is opened,
And voices soft and sweet.

From my study I see in the lamplight,
Descending the broad hall stair,
Grave Alice, and laughing Allegra,
And Edith with golden hair.

A whisper, and then a silence:
Yet I know by their merry eyes
They are plotting and planning together
To take me by surprise.

A sudden rush from the stairway,
A sudden raid from the hall!
By three doors left unguarded
They enter my castle wall!

They climb up into my turret
O'er the arms and back of my chair;
If I try to escape, they surround me;
They seem to be everywhere.

They almost devour me with kisses,
Their arms about me entwine,
Till I think of the Bishop of Bingen
In his Mouse-Tower on the Rhine!

Do you think, O blue-eyed banditti,
Because you have scaled the wall,
Such an old mustache as I am
Is not a match for you all!

I have you fast in my fortress,
And will not let you depart,
But put you down into the dungeon
In the round-tower of my heart.

And there will I keep you forever,

Yes, forever and a day,
Till the walls shall crumble to ruin,
And moulder in dust away.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow [1807–1882]

LAUS INFANTIUM

In praise of little children I will say
God first made man, then found a better way
For woman, but his third way was the best.
Of all created things, the loveliest
And most divine are children. Nothing here
Can be to us more gracious or more dear.
And though, when God saw all his works were good,
There was no rosy flower of babyhood,
'Twas said of children in a later day
That none could enter Heaven save such as they.

The earth, which feels the flowering of a thorn,
Was glad, O little child, when you were born;
The earth, which thrills when skylarks scale the blue,
Soared up itself to God's own Heaven in you;
And Heaven, which loves to lean down and to glass
Its beauty in each dewdrop on the grass, –
Heaven laughed to find your face so pure and fair,
And left, O little child, its reflex there.

William Canton [1845–

THE DESIRE

Give me no mansions ivory white
Nor palaces of pearl and gold;
Give me a child for all delight,
Just four years old.

Give me no wings of rosy shine
Nor snowy raiment, fold on fold,
Give me a little boy all mine,
Just four years old.

Give me no gold and starry crown
Nor harps, nor palm branches unrolled;
Give me a nestling head of brown,
Just four years old.

Give me a cheek that's like the peach,
Two arms to clasp me from the cold;
And all my heaven's within my reach,
Just four years old.

Dear God, You give me from Your skies
A little paradise to hold,
As Mary once her Paradise,
Just four years old.

Katherine Tynan Hinkson [1861–1931]

A CHILD'S LAUGHTER

All the bells of heaven may ring,
All the birds of heaven may sing,
All the wells on earth may spring,
All the winds on earth may bring
All sweet sounds together;
Sweeter far than all things heard,
Hand of harper, tone of bird,
Sound of woods at sundawn stirred,
Welling water's winsome word,
Wind in warm, wan weather.

One thing yet there is, that none,
Hearing ere its chime be done,
Knows not well the sweetest one
Heard of man beneath the sun,
Hoped in heaven hereafter;
Soft and strong and loud and light,
Very sound of very light,
Heard from morning's rosiest height,
When the soul of all delight,
Fills a child's clear laughter.

Golden bells of welcome rolled
Never forth such note, nor told
Hours so blithe in tones so bold,
As the radiant mouth of gold
Here that rings forth heaven.
If the golden-crested wren
Were a nightingale – why, then
Something seen and heard of men
Might be half as sweet as when
Laughs a child of seven.

Algernon Charles Swinburne [1837–1909]

SEVEN YEARS OLD

Seven white roses on one tree,
Seven white loaves of blameless leaven,
Seven white sails on one soft sea,
Seven white swans on one lake's lea,
Seven white flowerlike stars in Heaven,
All are types unmeet to be
For a birthday's crown of seven.

Not the radiance of the roses,
Not the blessing of the bread,
Not the breeze that ere day grows is
Fresh for sails and swans, and closes
Wings above the sun's grave spread
When the starshine on the snows is
Sweet as sleep on sorrow shed.

Nothing sweeter, nothing best,
Holds so good and sweet a treasure
As the love wherewith once blest
Joy grows holy, grief takes rest,
Life, half tired with hours to measure,
Fills his eyes and lips and breast
With most light and breath of pleasure;

As the rapture unpolluted,
As the passion undefiled,
By whose force all pains heart-rooted
Are transfigured and transmuted,
Recompensed and reconciled,
Through the imperial, undisputed,
Present godhead of a child.

Brown bright eyes and fair bright head,
Worth a worthier crown than this is,
Worth a worthier song instead,
Sweet grave wise round mouth, full fed
With the joy of love, whose bliss is
More than mortal wine and bread,
Lips whose words are sweet as kisses.

Little hands so glad of giving,
Little heart so glad of love,
Little soul so glad of living,
While the strong swift hours are weaving
Light with darkness woven above,
Time for mirth and time for grieving,

Plume of raven and plume of dove.

I can give you but a word
Warm with love therein for leaven,
But a song that falls unheard
Yet on ears of sense unstirred
Yet by song so far from Heaven,
Whence you came the brightest bird,
Seven years since, of seven times seven.

Algernon Charles Swinburne [1837–1909]

CREEP AFORE YE GANG

Creep awa', my bairnie, creep afore ye gang,
Cock ye baith your lugs to your auld Grannie's sang:
Gin ye gang as far ye will think the road lang,
Creep awa', my bairnie, creep afore ye gang.

Creep awa', my bairnie, ye're ower young to learn
To tot up and down yet, my bonnie wee bairn;
Better creepin' cannie, than fa'in' wi' a bang,
Duntin' a' your wee brow, – creep afore ye gang.

Ye'll creep, an' ye'll hotch, an' ye'll nod to your mither,
Watchin' ilka step o' your wee dousy brither;
Rest ye on the floor till your wee limbs grow strang,
An' ye'll be a braw chiel yet, – creep afore ye gang.

The wee birdie fa's when it tries ower soon to flee,
Folks are sure to tumble, when they climb ower hie;
They wha canna walk right are sure to come to wrang,
Creep awa', my bairnie, creep afore ye gang.

James Ballantine [1808–1877]

CASTLES IN THE AIR

The bonnie, bonnie bairn who sits poking in the ase,
Glowering in the fire wi' his wee round face,
Laughing at the fuffin' lowe – what sees he there?
Ha! the young dreamer's bigging castles in the air.

His wee chubby face and his touzie curly pow
Are laughing and nodding to the dancing lowe;
He'll brown his rosy cheeks, and singe his sunny hair,
Glowering at the imps wi' their castles in the air.

He sees muckle castles towering to the moon;
He sees little sodgers pu'ing them a' down;
Warlds whommlin' up and down, bleezing wi' a flare, –
See how he louns as they glimmer in the air!

For a' sae sage he looks, what can the laddie ken?
He's thinking upon naething, like mony mighty men:
A wee thing mak's us think, a sma' thing mak's us stare, –
There are mair folk than him bigging castles in the air.

Sic a night in winter may weel mak' him cauld:
His chin upon his buffy hand will soon mak' him auld;
His brow is brent sae braid – O pray that daddy Care
Wad let the wean alane wi' his castles in the air!

He'll glower at the fire, and he'll keek at the light;
But mony sparkling stars are swallowed up by Night:
Aulder e'en than his are glamored by a glare, –
Hearts are broken, heads are turned, wi' castles in the air.

James Ballantine [1808–1877]

UNDER MY WINDOW

Under my window, under my window,
All in the Midsummer weather,
Three little girls with fluttering curls
Flit to and fro together: –
There's Bell with her bonnet of satin sheen,
And Maud with her mantle of silver–green,
And Kate with her scarlet feather.

Under my window, under my window,
Leaning stealthily over,
Merry and clear, the voice I hear
Of each glad–hearted rover.
Ah! sly little Kate, she steals my roses;
And Maud and Bell twine wreaths and posies,
As merry as bees in clover.

Under my window, under my window,
In the blue Midsummer weather,
Stealing slow, on a hushed tiptoe,
I catch them all together: –
Bell with her bonnet of satin sheen,
And Maud with her mantle of silver–green,
And Kate with her scarlet feather.

Under my window, under my window,
And off through the orchard closes;
While Maud she flouts, and Bell she pouts,
They scamper and drop their posies;
But dear little Kate takes naught amiss,
And leaps in my arms with a loving kiss,
And I give her all my roses.

Thomas Westwood [1814?–1888]

LITTLE BELL

He prayeth well who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.
The Ancient Mariner

Piped the blackbird on the beechwood spray
"Pretty maid, slow wandering this way,
What's your name?" quoth he –
"What's your name? Oh stop and straight unfold,
Pretty maid with showery curls of gold," –
"Little Bell," said she.

Little Bell sat down beneath the rocks –
Tossed aside her gleaming golden locks –
"Bonny bird," quoth she,
"Sing me your best song before I go."
"Here's the very finest song I know,
Little Bell," said he.

And the blackbird piped; you never heard
Half so gay a song from any bird –
Full of quips and wiles,
Now so round and rich, now soft and slow.
All for love of that sweet face below,
Dimpled o'er with smiles.

And the while the bonny bird did pour
His full heart out freely o'er and o'er
'Neath the morning skies.
In the little childish heart below
All the sweetness seemed to grow and grow,
And shine forth in happy overflow
From the blue, bright eyes.

Down the dell she tripped and through the glade,
Peeped the squirrel from the hazel shade,
And from out the tree
Swung, and leaped, and frolicked, void of fear, –
While bold blackbird piped that all might hear –
"Little Bell," piped he.

Little Bell sat down amid the fern –
"Squirrel, to your task return –
Bring me nuts," quoth she.
Up, away the frisky squirrel hies –
Golden wood-lights glancing in his eyes –
And adown the tree,

Great ripe nuts, kissed brown by July sun,
In the little lap dropped one by one –
Hark, how blackbird pipes to see the fun!
"Happy Bell," pipes he.

Little Bell looked up and down the glade –
"Squirrel, squirrel, if you're not afraid,
Come and share with me!"
Down came squirrel eager for his fare –
Down came bonny blackbird I declare;
Little Bell gave each his honest share –
Ah the merry three!
And the while these frolic playmates twain
Piped and frisked from bough to bough again,
'Neath the morning skies,
In the little childish heart below
All the sweetness seemed to grow and grow,
And shine out in happy overflow
From her blue, bright eyes.

By her snow–white cot at close of day,
Knelt sweet Bell, with folded palms to pray –
Very calm and clear
Rose the praying voice to where, unseen,
In blue heaven, an angel shape serene
Paused awhile to hear –
"What good child is this," the angel said,
"That, with happy heart, beside her bed
Prays so lovingly?"
Low and soft, oh! very low and soft,
Crooned the blackbird in the orchard croft,
"Bell, dear Bell!" crooned he.

"Whom God's creatures love," the angel fair
Murmured, "God doth bless with angels' care;
Child, thy bed shall be
Folded safe from harm – Love deep and kind
Shall watch around and leave good gifts behind,
Little Bell, for thee!"

Thomas Westwood [1814?–1888]

THE BAREFOOT BOY

Blessings on thee, little man,
Barefoot boy, with cheek of tan!
With thy turned-up pantaloons,
And thy merry whistled tunes;
With thy red lip, redder still
Kissed by strawberries on the hill;
With the sunshine on thy face,
Through thy torn brim's jaunty grace;
From my heart I give thee joy, –
I was once a barefoot boy!
Prince thou art, – the grown-up man
Only is republican.
Let the million-dollared ride!
Barefoot, trudging at his side,
Thou hast more than he can buy
In the reach of ear and eye, –
Outward sunshine, inward joy:
Blessings on thee, barefoot boy!

Oh for boyhood's painless play,
Sleep that wakes in laughing day,
Health that mocks the doctor's rules,
Knowledge never learned of schools,
Of the wild bee's morning chase,
Of the wild flower's time and place,
Flight of fowl and habitude
Of the tenants of the wood;
How the tortoise bears his shell,
How the woodchuck digs his cell,
And the ground-mole sinks his well;
How the robin feeds her young,
How the oriole's nest is hung;
Where the whitest lilies blow,
Where the freshest berries grow,
Where the ground-nut trails its vine,
Where the wood-grape's clusters shine;
Of the black wasp's cunning way,
Mason of his walls of clay,
And the architectural plans
Of gray hornet artisans!
For, eschewing books and tasks,
Nature answers all he asks;
Hand in hand with her he walks,
Face to face with her he talks,
Part and parcel of her joy, –
Blessings on the barefoot boy!

Oh for boyhood's time of June,
Crowding years in one brief moon,
When all things I heard or saw,
Me, their master, waited for.
I was rich in flowers and trees,
Humming-birds and honey-bees;
For my sport the squirrel played,
Plied the snouted mole his spade;
For my taste the blackberry cone
Purpled over hedge and stone;
Laughed the brook for my delight
Through the day and through the night,
Whispering at the garden wall,
Talked with me from fall to fall;
Mine the sand-rimmed pickerel pond
Mine the walnut slopes beyond,
Mine, on bending orchard trees,
Apples of Hesperides!
Still as my horizon grew,
Larger grew my riches too;
All the world I saw or knew
Seemed a complex Chinese toy,
Fashioned for a barefoot boy!

Oh for festal dainties spread,
Like my bowl of milk and bread;
Pewter spoon and bowl of wood,
On the door-stone, gray and rude!
O'er me, like a regal tent,
Cloudy-ribbed, the sunset bent,
Purple-curtained, fringed with gold,
Looped in many a wind-swung fold;
While for music came the play
Of the pied frogs' orchestra;
And, to light the noisy choir,
Lit the fly his lamp of fire.
I was monarch: pomp and joy
Waited on the barefoot boy!

Cheerily, then, my little man,
Live and laugh, as boyhood can!
Though the flinty slopes be hard,
Stubble-speared the new-mown sward,
Every morn shall lead thee through
Fresh baptisms of the dew;
Every evening from thy feet
Shall the cool wind kiss the heat:
All too soon these feet must hide
In the prison cells of pride,
Lose the freedom of the sod,

Like a colt's for work be shod,
Made to tread the mills of toil,
Up and down in ceaseless moil:
Happy if their track be found
Never on forbidden ground;
Happy if they sink not in
Quick and treacherous sands of sin.
Ah! that thou couldst know thy joy,
Ere it passes, barefoot boy!

John Greenleaf Whittier [1807–1892]

THE HERITAGE

Thee rich man's son inherits lands,
And piles of brick and stone, and gold,
And he inherits soft white hands,
And tender flesh that fears the cold,
Nor dares to wear a garment old;
A heritage, it seems to me,
One scarce would wish to hold in fee.

The rich man's son inherits cares;
The bank may break, the factory burn,
A breath may burst his bubble shares,
And soft white hands could hardly earn
A living that would serve his turn;
A heritage, it seems to me,
One scarce would wish to hold in fee.

The rich man's son inherits wants,
His stomach craves for dainty fare;
With sated heart, he hears the pants
Of toiling hinds with brown arms bare,
And wearies in his easy-chair;
A heritage, it seems to me,
One scarce would wish to hold in fee.

What doth the poor man's son inherit?
Stout muscles and a sinewy heart,
A hardy frame, a hardier spirit,
King of two hands, he does his part
In every useful toil and art;
A heritage, it seems to me,
A king might wish to hold in fee.

What doth the poor man's son inherit?
Wishes o'erjoyed with humble things,
A rank adjudged by toil-won merit,
Content that from employment springs,
A heart that in his labor sings;
A heritage, it seems to me,
A king might wish to hold in fee.

What doth the poor man's son inherit?
A patience learned of being poor,
Courage, if sorrow come, to bear it,
A fellow-feeling that is sure
To make the outcast bless his door;
A heritage, it seems to me,

A king might wish to hold in fee.

O rich man's son! there is a toil
That with all others level stands;
Large charity doth never soil,
But only whiten, soft white hands;
This is the best crop from thy lands,
A heritage, it seems to me,
Worth being rich to hold in fee.

O poor man's son! scorn not thy state;
There is worse weariness than thine,
In merely being rich and great;
Toil only gives the soul to shine,
And makes rest fragrant and benign;
A heritage, it seems to me,
Worth being poor to hold in fee.

Both, heirs to some six feet of sod,
Are equal in the earth at last;
Both, children of the same dear God,
Prove title to your heirship vast
By record of a well-filled past;
A heritage, it seems to me,
Well worth a life to hold in fee.

James Russell Lowell [1819–1891]

LETTY'S GLOBE

Or Some Irregularities In A First Lesson In Geography

When Letty had scarce passed her third glad year,
And her young artless words began to flow,
One day we gave the child a colored sphere
Of the wide Earth, that she might mark and know,
By tint and outline, all its sea and land.
She patted all the world; old Empires peeped
Between her baby fingers; her soft hand
Was welcome at all frontiers. How she leaped,
And laughed and prattled in her world-wide bliss!
But when we turned her sweet unlearned eye
On our own Isle, she raised a joyous cry, –
"O yes! I see it, Letty's home is there!"
And while she hid all England with a kiss,
Bright over Europe fell her golden hair.

Charles Tennyson Turner [1808–1879]

DOVE'S NEST

"Sylvia, hush!" I said, "come here,
Come see a fairy-tale, my dear!
Tales told are good, tales seen are best!"
The dove was brooding on the nest
In the lowest crotch of the apple tree.
I lifted her up so quietly,
That when she could have touched the bird
The soft gray creature had not stirred.
It looked at us with a wild dark eye.
But, "Birdie, fly!" was Sylvia's cry,
Impatient Sylvia, "Birdie, fly."
Ah, well: but when I touched the nest,
The child recoiled upon my breast.
Was ever such a startling thing?
Sudden silver and purple wing,
The dove was out, away, across,
Struggling heart-break on the grass.
And there in the cup within the tree
Two milk-white eggs were ours to see.
Was ever thing so pretty? Alack,
"Birdie!" Sylvia cried, "come back!"

Joseph Russell Taylor [1868-1933]

THE ORACLE

I lay upon the summer grass.
A gold-haired, sunny child came by,
And looked at me, as loath to pass,
With questions in her lingering eye.

She stopped and wavered, then drew near,
(Ah! the pale gold around her head!)
And o'er my shoulder stopped to peer.
"Why do you read?" she said.

"I read a poet of old time,
Who sang through all his living hours –
Beauty of earth – the streams, the flowers –
And stars, more lovely than his rhyme.

"And now I read him, since men go,
Forgetful of these sweetest things;
Since he and I love brooks that flow,
And dawns, and bees, and flash of wings!"

She stared at me with laughing look,
Then clasped her hands upon my knees:
"How strange to read it in a book!
I could have told you all of these!"

Arthur Davison Ficke [1883–

TO A LITTLE GIRL

You taught me ways of gracefulness and fashions of address,
The mode of plucking pansies and the art of sowing cress,
And how to handle puppies, with propitiatory pats
For mother dogs, and little acts of courtesy to cats.

O connoisseur of pebbles, colored leaves and trickling rills,
Whom seasons fit as do the sheaths that wrap the daffodils,
Whose eyes' divine expectancy foretells some starry goal,
You taught me here docility – and how to save my soul.

Helen Parry Eden [18

TO A LITTLE GIRL

Her eyes are like forget-me-nots,
So loving, kind and true;
Her lips are like a pink sea-shell
Just as the sun shines through;
Her hair is like the waving grain
In summer's golden light;
And, best of all, her little soul
Is, like a lily, white.

Gustav Kobbe [1857–1918]

A PARENTAL ODE TO MY SON

Aged Three Years And Five Months

Thou happy, happy elf!
(But stop, – first let me kiss away that tear!)
Thou tiny image of myself!
(My love, he's poking peas into his ear!)
Thou merry, laughing sprite,
With spirits feather–light,
Untouched by sorrow, and unsoiled by sin, –
(My dear, the child is swallowing a pin!)

Thou little tricky Puck!
With antic toys so funnily bestuck,
Light as the singing bird that wings the air, –
(The door! the door! he'll tumble down the stair!)
Thou darling of thy sire!
(Why, Jane, he'll set his pinafore afire!)
Thou imp of mirth and joy!
In Love's dear chain so strong and bright a link,
Thou idol of thy parents, – (Drat the boy!
There goes my ink!)

Thou cherub, – but of earth;
Fit playfellow for Fays, by moonlight pale,
In harmless sport and mirth,
(That dog will bite him, if he pulls its tail!)
Thou human humming–bee, extracting honey
From every blossom in the world that blows,
Singing in youth's Elysium ever sunny. –
(Another tumble! That's his precious nose!)

Thy father's pride and hope!
(He'll break the mirror with that skipping–rope!)
With pure heart newly stamped from nature's mint,
(Where did he learn that squint?)
Thou young domestic dove!
(He'll have that jug off with another shove!)
Dear nursling of the hymeneal nest!
(Are these torn clothes his best?)
Little epitome of man!
(He'll climb upon the table, that's his plan!)
Touched with the beauteous tints of dawning life, –
(He's got a knife!)

Thou enviable being!
No storms, no clouds, in thy blue sky foreseeing,
Play on, play on,

My elfin John!
Toss the light ball, bestride the stick, –
(I knew so many cakes would make him sick!)
With fancies, buoyant as the thistle–down,
Prompting the face grotesque, and antic brisk,
With many a lamb–like frisk!
(He's got the scissors, snipping at your gown!)

Thou pretty opening rose!
(Go to your mother, child, and wipe your nose!)
Balmy and breathing music like the South, –
(He really brings my heart into my mouth!)
Fresh as the morn, and brilliant as its star, –
(I wish that window had an iron bar!)
Bold as the hawk, yet gentle as the dove; –
(I'll tell you what, my love,
I cannot write unless he's sent above.)

Thomas Hood [1799–1845]

A NEW POET

I write. He sits beside my chair,
And scribbles, too, in hushed delight,
He dips his pen in charmed air:
What is it he pretends to write?

He toils and toils; the paper gives
No clue to aught he thinks. What then?
His little heart is glad; he lives
The poems that he cannot pen.

Strange fancies throng that baby brain.
What grave, sweet looks! What earnest eyes!
He stops – reflects – and now again
His unrecording pen he plies.

It seems a satire on myself, –
These dreamy nothings scrawled in air,
This thought, this work! Oh tricky elf,
Wouldst drive thy father to despair?

Despair! Ah, no; the heart, the mind
Persists in hoping, – schemes and strives
That there may linger with our kind
Some memory of our little lives.

Beneath his rock in the early world
Smiling the naked hunter lay,
And sketched on horn the spear he hurled,
The urus which he made his prey.

Like him I strive in hope my rhymes
May keep my name a little while, –
O child, who knows how many times
We two have made the angels smile!

William Canton [1845–

TO LAURA W--, TWO YEARS OLD

Bright be the skies that cover thee,
Child of the sunny brow, –
Bright as the dream flung over thee
By all that meets thee now, –
Thy heart is beating joyously,
Thy voice is like a bird's,
And sweetly breaks the melody
Of thy imperfect words.
I know no fount that gushes out
As gladly as thy tiny shout.

I would that thou might'st ever be
As beautiful as now,
That time might ever leave as free
Thy yet unwritten brow.
I would life were all poetry
To gentle measure set,
That naught but chastened melody
Might stain thine eye of jet,
Nor one discordant note be spoken,
Till God the cunning harp hath broken.

I would – but deeper things than these
With woman's lot are wove:
Wrought of intensest sympathies,
And nerved by purest love;
By the strong spirit's discipline,
By the fierce wrong forgiven,
By all that wrings the heart of sin,
Is woman won to heaven.
"Her lot is on thee," lovely child –
God keep thy spirit undefiled!

I fear thy gentle loveliness,
Thy witching tone and air,
Thine eye's beseeching earnestness
May be to thee a snare.
The silver stars may purely shine,
The waters taintless flow:
But they who kneel at woman's shrine
Breathe on it as they bow.
Peace may fling back the gift again,
But the crushed flower will leave a stain.

What shall preserve thee, beautiful child?
Keep thee as thou art now?

Bring thee, a spirit undefiled,
At God's pure throne to bow?
The world is but a broken reed,
And life grows early dim –
Who shall be near thee in thy need,
To lead thee up to Him?
He who himself was "undefiled?"
With Him we trust thee, beautiful child!

Nathaniel Parker Willis [1806–1867]

TO ROSE

Rose, when I remember you,
Little lady, scarcely two,
I am suddenly aware
Of the angels in the air.
All your softly gracious ways
Make an island in my days
Where my thoughts fly back to be
Sheltered from too strong a sea.
All your luminous delight
Shines before me in the night
When I grope for sleep and find
Only shadows in my mind.

Rose, when I remember you,
White and glowing, pink and new,
With so swift a sense of fun
Although life has just begun;
With so sure a pride of place
In your very infant face,
I should like to make a prayer
To the angels in the air:
"If an angel ever brings
Me a baby in her wings,
Please be certain that it grows
Very, very much like Rose."

Sara Teasdale [1884–1933]

TO CHARLOTTE PULTENEY

Timely blossom, Infant fair,
Fondling of a happy pair,
Every morn and every night
Their solicitous delight,
Sleeping, waking, still at ease,
Pleasing, without skill to please;
Little gossip, blithe and hale,
Tattling many a broken tale,
Singing many a tuneless song,
Lavish of a heedless tongue;
Simple maiden, void of art,
Babbling out the very heart,
Yet abandoned to thy will,
Yet imagining no ill,
Yet too innocent to blush;
Like the linnet in the bush
To the mother-linnet's note
Moduling her slender throat;
Chirping forth thy pretty joys,
Wanton in the change of toys,
Like the linnet green, in May
Flitting to each bloomy spray;
Wearied then and glad of rest,
Like the linnet in the nest: –
This thy present happy lot,
This, in time will be forgot:
Other pleasures, other cares,
Ever-busy Time prepares;
And thou shalt in thy daughter see,
This picture, once, resembled thee.

Ambrose Philips [1675?–1749]

THE PICTURE OF LITTLE T. C. IN A PROSPECT OF FLOWERS

See with what simplicity
This nymph begins her golden days!
In the green grass she loves to lie,
And there with her fair aspect tames
The wilder flowers, and gives them names;
But only with the roses plays,
And them does tell
What color best becomes them, and what smell.

Who can foretell for what high cause
This darling of the gods was born?
Yet this is she whose chaster laws
The wanton Love shall one day fear,
And, under her command severe,
See his bow broke, and ensigns torn.
Happy who can
Appease this virtuous enemy of man!

O then let me in time compound
And parley with those conquering eyes,
Ere they have tried their force to wound,
Ere with their glancing wheels they drive
In triumph over hearts that strive,
And them that yield but more despise:
Let me be laid
Where I may see the glories from some shade.

Meantime, whilst every verdant thing
Itself does at thy beauty charm,
Reform the errors of the Spring;
Make that the tulips may have share
Of sweetness, seeing they are fair,
And roses of their thorns disarm
But most procure
That violets may a longer age endure.

But O young beauty of the woods,
Whom Nature courts with fruits and flowers,
Gather the flowers, but spare the buds;
Lest Flora, angry at thy crime
To kill her infants in their prime,
Do quickly make the example yours;
And, ere we see,
Nip, in the blossom, all our hopes and thee.

Andrew Marvell [1621–1678]

TO HARTLEY COLERIDGE

Six Years Old

O thou! whose fancies from afar are brought:
Who of thy words dost make a mock apparel,
And fittest to unutterable thought
The breeze-like motion and the self-born carol;
Thou fairy voyager! that dost float
In such clear water, that thy boat
May rather seem
To brood on air than on an earthly stream;
Suspended in a stream as clear as sky,
Where earth and heaven do make one imagery:
O blessed vision! happy child!
Thou art so exquisitely wild,
I think of thee with many fears
For what may be thy lot in future years.
I thought of times when Pain might be thy guest,
Lord of thy house and hospitality;
And Grief, uneasy lover! never rest
But when she sate within the touch of thee.
O too industrious folly!
O vain and causeless melancholy!
Nature will either end thee quite;
Or, lengthening out thy season of delight,
Preserve for thee, by individual right,
A young lamb's heart among the full-grown flocks.
What hast thou to do with sorrow,
Or the injuries of to-morrow?
Thou art a dew-drop, which the morn brings forth,
Ill-fitted to sustain unkindly shocks,
Or to be trailed along the soiling earth;
A gem that glitters while it lives,
And no forewarning gives;
But, at the touch of wrong, without a strife,
Slips in a moment out of life.

William Wordsworth [1770–1850]

TO A CHILD OF QUALITY

Five Years Old, 1704, The Author Then Forty

Lords, knights, and squires, the numerous band
That wear the fair Miss Mary's fetters,
Were summoned by her high command
To show their passions by their letters.

My pen amongst the rest I took,
Lest those bright eyes, that cannot read,
Should dart their kindling fires, and look
The power they have to be obeyed.

Nor quality, nor reputation,
Forbids me yet my flame to tell;
Dear Five-years-old befriends my passion,
And I may write till she can spell.

For, while she makes her silkworms' beds
With all the tender things I swear;
Whilst all the house my passion reads,
In papers round her baby's hair;

She may receive and own my flame;
For, though the strictest prudes should know it,
She'll pass for a most virtuous dame,
And I for an unhappy poet.

Then too, alas! when she shall tear
The rhymes some younger rival sends,
She'll give me leave to write, I fear,
And we shall still continue friends.

For, as our different ages move,
'Tis so ordained (would Fate but mend it!),
That I shall be past making love
When she begins to comprehend it.

Matthew Prior [1664–1721]

EX ORE INFANTIUM

Little Jesus, wast Thou shy
Once, and just so small as I?
And what did it feel like to be
Out of Heaven, and just like me?
Didst Thou sometimes think of there,
And ask where all the angels were?
I should think that I would cry
For my house all made of sky;
I would look about the air,
And wonder where my angels were;
And at waking 'twould distress me –
Not an angel there to dress me!

Hadst Thou ever any toys,
Like us little girls and boys?
And didst Thou play in Heaven with all
The angels, that were not too tall,
With stars for marbles? Did the things
Play Can you see me? through their wings?

Didst Thou kneel at night to pray,
And didst Thou join Thy hands, this way?
And did they tire sometimes, being young,
And make the prayer seem very long?
And dost Thou like it best, that we
Should join our hands to pray to Thee?
I used to think, before I knew,
The prayer not said unless we do.
And did Thy Mother at the night
Kiss Thee, and fold the clothes in right?
And didst Thou feel quite good in bed,
Kissed, and sweet, and Thy prayers said?

Thou canst not have forgotten all
That it feels like to be small:
And Thou know'st I cannot pray
To Thee in my father's way –
When Thou wast so little, say,
Could'st Thou talk Thy Father's way? –
So, a little Child, come down
And hear a child's tongue like Thy own;

Take me by the hand and walk,
And listen to my baby-talk.
To Thy Father show my prayer
(He will look, Thou art so fair),

And say: "O Father, I, Thy Son,
Bring the prayer of a little one."

And He will smile, that children's tongue
Has not changed since Thou wast young!

Francis Thompson [1859–1907]

OBITUARY

Finding Francesca full of tears, I said,
"Tell me thy trouble." "Oh, my dog is dead!
Murdered by poison! – no one knows for what! –
Was ever dog born capable of that?"
"Child," – I began to say, but checked my thought, –
"A better dog can easily be bought."
For no – what animal could him replace?
Those loving eyes! That fond, confiding face!
Those dear, dumb touches! Therefore I was dumb.
From word of mine could any comfort come?
A bitter sorrow 'tis to lose a brute
Friend, dog or horse, for grief must then be mute, –
So many smile to see the rivers shed
Of tears for one poor, speechless creature dead.
When parents die there's many a word to say –
Kind words, consoling – one can always pray;
When children die 'tis natural to tell
Their mother, "Certainly, with them 'tis well!"
But for a dog, 'twas all the life he had,
Since death is end of dogs, or good or bad.
This was his world; he was contented here;
Imagined nothing better, naught more dear,
Than his young mistress; sought no brighter sphere;
Having no sin, asked not to be forgiven;
Ne'er guessed at God nor ever dreamed of heaven.
Now he has passed away, so much of love
Goes from our life, without one hope above!
When a dog dies there's nothing to be said
But – kiss me, darling! – dear old Smiler's dead.

Thomas William Parsons [1819–1892]

THE CHILD'S HERITAGE

On, there are those, a sordid clan,
With pride in gaud and faith in gold,
Who prize the sacred soul of man
For what his hands have sold.

And these shall deem thee humbly bred:
They shall not hear, they shall not see
The kings among the lordly dead
Who walk and talk with thee!

A tattered cloak may be thy dole,
And thine the roof that Jesus had:
The brodered garment of the soul
Shall keep thee purple-clad!

The blood of men hath dyed its brede,
And it was wrought by holy seers
With sombre dream and golden deed,
And pearled with women's tears.

With Eld thy chain of days is one:
The seas are still Homeric seas;
Thy skies shall glow with Pindar's sun,
The stars of Socrates!

Unaged the ancient tide shall surge,
The old Spring burn along the bough:
For thee, new and old converge
In one eternal Now!

I give thy feet the hopeful sod,
Thy mouth, the priceless boon of breath;
The glory of the search for God
Be thine in life and death!

Unto thy flesh, the soothing dust;
Thy soul, the gift of being free:
The torch my fathers gave in trust,
Thy father gives to thee!

John G. Neihardt [1881–

A GIRL OF POMPEII

A public haunt they found her in:
She lay asleep, a lovely child;
The only thing left undefiled
Where all things else bore taint of sin.

Her supple outlines fixed in clay

The universal law suspend,
And turn Time's chariot back, and blend
A thousand years with yesterday.

A sinless touch, austere yet warm,
Around her girlish figure pressed,
Caught the sweet imprint of her breast,
And held her, surely clasped, from harm.

Truer than work of sculptor's art
Comes this dear maid of long ago,
Sheltered from woeful chance, to show
A spirit's lovely counterpart,

And bid mistrustful men be sure
That form shall fate of flesh escape,
And, quit of earth's corruptions, shape
Itself, imperishably pure.

Edward Sandford Martin [1856–

ON THE PICTURE OF A "CHILD TIRED OF PLAY"

Tired of play! Tired of play!
What hast thou done this live-long day!
The bird is silent and so is the bee,
The shadow is creeping up steeple and tree;

The doves have flown to the sheltering eaves,

And the nests are dark with the drooping leaves;
Twilight gathers, and day is done, –
How hast thou spent it, restless one?

Playing! And what hast thou done beside
To tell thy mother at eventide?
What promise of morn is left unbroken?
What kind word to thy playmate spoken?
Whom hast thou pitied, and whom forgiven?
How with thy faults has duty striven?
What hast thou learned by field and hill,
By greenwood path and by singing rill?

There will come an eve to a longer day
That will find thee tired, – but not with play!
And thou wilt learn, as thou learnest now,
With wearied limbs and aching brow,
And wish the shadows would faster creep
And long to go to thy quiet sleep.

Well will it be for thee then if thou
Art as free from sin and shame as now!
Well for thee if thy tongue can tell
A tale like this, of a day spent well!
If thine open hand hath relieved distress,
And thy pity hath sprung to wretchedness –
If thou hast forgiven the sore offence
And humbled thy heart with penitence;

If Nature's voices have spoken to thee
With her holy meanings, eloquently –
If every creature hath won thy love,
From the creeping worm to the brooding dove –
If never a sad, low-spoken word
Hath plead with thy human heart unheard –
Then, when the night steals on, as now
It will bring relief to thine aching brow,
And, with joy and peace at the thought of rest,
Thou wilt sink to sleep on thy mother's breast.

Nathaniel Parker Willis [1806–1867]

THE REVERIE OF POOR SUSAN

At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears,
Hangs a Thrush that sings loud, it has sung for three years:
Poor Susan has passed by the spot, and has heard
In the silence of morning the song of the Bird.

'Tis a note of enchantment; what ails her? She sees
A mountain ascending, a vision of trees;
Bright volumes of vapor through Lothbury glide,
And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.

Green pastures she views in the midst of the dale,
Down which she so often has tripped with her pail;
And a single small cottage, a nest like a dove's,
The one only dwelling on earth that she loves.

She looks, and her heart is in heaven: but they fade,
The mist and the river, the hill and the shade:
The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise,
And the colors have all passed away from her eyes!

William Wordsworth [1770–1850]

CHILDREN'S SONG

Sometimes wind and sometimes rain,
Then the sun comes back again;
Sometimes rain and sometimes snow,
Goodness, how we'd like to know
Why the weather alters so.

When the weather's really good
We go nutting in the wood;
When it rains we stay at home,
And then sometimes other some
Of the neighbors' children come.

Sometimes we have jam and meat,
All the things we like to eat;
Sometimes we make do with bread
And potatoes boiled instead.
Once when we were put to bed
We had nowt and mother cried,
But that was after father died.

So, sometimes wind and sometimes rain,
Then the sun comes back again;
Sometimes rain and sometimes snow,
Goodness, how we'd like to know
If things will always alter so.

Ford Madox Ford [1873–

THE MITHERLESS BAIRN

When a' other bairnies are hushed to their hame
By aunty, or cousin, or frecky grand-dame,
Wha stands last and lanely, an' naebody carin'?
'Tis the puir doited loonie, – the mitherless bairn!

The mitherless bairn gangs to his lane bed;
Nane covers his cauld back, or haps his bare head;
His wee hackit heelies are hard as the airn,
An' litheless the lair o' the mitherless bairn.

Aneath his cauld brow siccan dreams hover there,
O' hands that wont kindly to kame his dark hair;
But mornin' brings clutches, a' reckless an' stern,
That lo'e na the locks o' the mitherless bairn!

Yon sister that sang o'er his saftly rocked bed
Now rests in the mools where her mammie is laid;
The father toils sair their wee bannock to earn,
An' kens na the wrangs o' his mitherless bairn.

Her spirit, that passed in yon hour o' his birth,
Still watches his wearisome wanderings on earth;
Recording in heaven the blessings they earn
Wha couthilie deal wi' the mitherless bairn!

O, speak him na harshly, – he trembles the while,
He bends to your bidding, and blesses your smile;
In their dark hour o' anguish the heartless shall learn
That God deals the blow, for the mitherless bairn!

William Thom [1798?–1848]

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,
And that cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
The young birds are chirping in the nest,
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
The young flowers are blowing toward the west –
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly!
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow,
Why their tears are falling so?
The old man may weep for his to-morrow
Which is lost in Long Ago;
The old tree is leafless in the forest,
The old year is ending in the frost,
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,
The old hope is hardest to be lost:
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
Do you ask them why they stand
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy Fatherland?

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy;
"Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary;
Our young feet" they say, "are very weak;
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary –
Our grave-rest is very far to seek:
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children
For the outside earth is cold,
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old.

"True," say the children, "it may happen
That we die before our time:
Little Alice died last year – her grave is shapen
Like a snowball, in the rime.
We looked into the pit prepared to take her:
Was no room for any work in the close clay!
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,

Crying, 'Get up, little Alice! it is day.'
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
With your ear down, little Alice never cries;
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes:
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud by the kirk-chime.
It is good when it happens," say the children,
"That we die before our time."

Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking
Death in life, as best to have!
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a cerement from the grave.
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do;
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow cowslips pretty;
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through!
But they answer, "Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds anear the mine?
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine!

"For oh," say the children, "we are weary,
And we cannot run or leap;
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
To drop down in them and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,
We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring,
Through the coal-dark, underground;
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.

"For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning;
Their wind comes in our faces,
Till our hearts turn, our heads, with pulses burning,
And the walls turn in their places:
Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling,
Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling:
All are turning, all the day, and we with all.
And all day, the iron wheels are droning;
And sometimes we could pray,
'O ye wheels, (breaking out in a mad moaning)
'Stop! be silent for to-day!'"

Ay, be silent! Let them hear each other breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth!

Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing
Of their tender human youth!
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals:
Let them prove their living souls against the notion
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark;
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,
To look up to Him and pray;
So the blessed One, who blesseth all the others,
Will bless them another day.
They answer, "Who is God that He should hear us,
While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred?
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word!
And we hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
Strangers speaking at the door:
Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,
Hears our weeping any more?"

"Two words, indeed, of praying we remember,
And at midnight's hour of harm,
'Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber,
We say softly for a charm.
We know no other words except 'Our Father,'
And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,
God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
And hold both within his right hand which is strong.
'Our Father!' If He heard us, He would surely
(For they call Him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
'Come and rest with me, my child.'

"But no!" say the children, weeping faster,
"He is speechless as a stone;
And they tell us, of His image is the master
Who commands us to work on.
Go to!" say the children, – "Up in Heaven,
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.
Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving:
We look up for God, but tears have made us blind."
Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,
O my brothers, what ye preach?
For God's possible is taught by His world's loving,
And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before you!

They are weary ere they run;
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
Which is brighter than the sun.
They know the grief of man, without its wisdom;
They sink in man's despair, without its calm;
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm:
Are worn as if with age, yet unretrievably
The harvest of its memories cannot reap, –
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.
Let them weep! let them weep!

They look up, with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in high places,
With eyes turned on Deity.
"How long," they say, "how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart, –
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
Our blood splashes upward, O gold–heaper,
And your purple shows your path;

But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath!"

Elizabeth Barrett Browning [1806–1861]

THE SHADOW-CHILD

Why do the wheels go whirring round,
Mother, mother?
Oh, mother, are they giants bound,
And will they growl forever?
Yes, fiery giants underground,
Daughter, little daughter,
Forever turn the wheels around,
And rumble-grumble ever.

Why do I pick the threads all day,
Mother, mother?
While sunshine children are at play?
And must I work forever?
Yes, shadow-child; the live-long day,
Daughter, little daughter,
Your hands must pick the threads away,
And feel the sunshine never.

Why do the birds sing in the sun,
Mother, mother?
If all day long I run and run,
Run with the wheels forever?
The birds may sing till day is done,
Daughter, little daughter,
But with the wheels your feet must run –
Run with the wheels forever.

Why do I feel so tired each night,
Mother, mother?
The wheels are always buzzing bright;
Do they grow sleepy never?
Oh, baby thing, so soft and white,
Daughter, little daughter,
The big wheels grind us in their might,
And they will grind forever.

And is the white thread never spun,
Mother, mother?
And is the white cloth never done,
For you and me done never?
Oh, yes, our thread will all be spun,
Daughter, little daughter,
When we lie down out in the sun,
And work no more forever.

And when will come that happy day,

Mother, mother?
Oh, shall we laugh and sing and play
Out in the sun forever?
Nay, shadow-child, we'll rest all day,
Daughter, little daughter,
Where green grass grows and roses gay,
There in the sun forever.

Harriet Monroe [1860–1936]

MOTHER WEPT

Mother wept, and father sighed;
With delight aglow
Cried the lad, "To-morrow," cried,
"To the pit I go."

Up and down the place he sped, –
Greeted old and young;
Far and wide the tidings spread;
Clapt his hands and sung.

Came his cronies; some to gaze
Wrapped in wonder; some
Free with counsel; some with praise:
Some with envy dumb.

"May he," many a gossip cried,
"Be from peril kept."
Father hid his face and sighed,
Mother turned and wept.

Joseph Skipsey [1832–1903]

DUTY

So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man,
When Duty whispers low, "Thou must,"
The youth replies, "I can."

Ralph Waldo Emerson [1803–1882]

LUCY GRAY

Or Solitude

Oft I had heard of Lucy Gray:
And, when I crossed the wild,
I chanced to see, at break of day,
The solitary child.

No mate, no comrade Lucy knew;
She dwelt on a wide moor,
The sweetest thing that ever grew
Beside a human door!

You yet may spy the fawn at play,
The hare upon the green;
But the sweet face of Lucy Gray
Will never more be seen.

"To-night will be a stormy night, –
You to the town must go;
And take a lantern, Child, to light
Your mother through the snow."

"That, Father, will I gladly do:
'Tis scarcely afternoon, –
The minster-clock has just struck two,
And yonder is the moon!"

At this the Father raised his hook,
And snapped a fagot-brand.
He plied his work; – and Lucy took
The lantern in her hand.

Not blither is the mountain roe:
With many a wanton stroke
Her feet disperse the powdery snow,
That rises up like smoke.

The storm came on before its time:
She wandered up and down:
And many a hill did Lucy climb:
But never reached the town.

The wretched parents all that night
Went shouting far and wide;
But there was neither sound nor sight
To serve them for a guide.

At daybreak on the hill they stood
That overlooked the moor;
And thence they saw the bridge of wood,
A furlong from their door.

They wept, – and, turning homeward, cried,
"In heaven we all shall meet;"
When in the snow the mother spied
The print of Lucy's feet.

Then downwards from the steep hill's edge
They tracked the footmarks small:
And through the broken hawthorn–hedge,
And by the low stone–wall;

And then an open field they crossed –
The marks were still the same –
They tracked them on, nor ever lost;
And to the bridge they came.

They followed from the snowy bank
Those footmarks, one by one,
Into the middle of the plank;
And further there were none!

– Yet some maintain that to this day
She is a living child;
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
Upon the lonesome wild.

O'er rough and smooth she trips along,
And never looks behind;
And sings a solitary song
That whistles in the wind.

William Wordsworth [1770–1850]

IN THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Emmie

Our doctor had called in another, I never had seen him before,
But he sent a chill to my heart when I saw him come in at the door,
Fresh from the surgery—schools of France and of other lands —
Harsh red hair, big voice, big chest, big merciless hands!
Wonderful cures he had done, O yes, but they said too of him
He was happier using the knife than in trying to save the limb,
And that I can well believe, for he looked so coarse and so red,
I could think he was one of those who would break their jests on the dead,
And mangle the living dog that had loved him and fawned at his knee —
Drenched with the hellish oorali — that ever such things should be!

Here was a boy — I am sure that some of our children would die
But for the voice of love, and the smile, and the comforting eye —
Here was a boy in the ward, every bone seemed out of its place —
Caught in a mill and crushed — it was all but a hopeless case:
And he handled him gently enough; but his voice and his face were not kind,
And it was but a hopeless case, he had seen it and made up his mind,
And he said to me roughly "The lad will need little more of your care."
"All the more need," I told him, "to seek the Lord Jesus in prayer;
They are all His children here, and I pray for them all as my own:"
But he turned to me, "Ay, good woman, can prayer set a broken bone?"
Then he muttered half to himself, but I know that I heard him say,
"All very well — but the good Lord Jesus has had his day."

Had? has it come? It has only dawned. It will come by and by.
O, how could I serve in the wards if the hope of the world were a lie?
How could I bear with the sights and the loathsome smells of disease
But that He said "Ye do it to me, when ye do it to these"?

So he went. And we passed to this ward where the younger children are laid:
Here is the cot of our orphan, our darling, our meek little maid;
Empty you see just now! We have lost her who loved her so much —
Patient of pain though as quick as a sensitive plant to the touch;
Hers was the prettiest prattle, it often moved me to tears,
Hers was the gratefullest heart I have found in a child of her years —
Nay you remember our Emmie; you used to send her the flowers;
How she would smile at 'em, play with 'em, talk to 'em hours after hours!

They that can wander at will where the works of the Lord are revealed
Little guess what joy can be got from a cowslip out of the field;
Flowers to these "spirits in prison" are all they can know of the spring,
They freshen and sweeten the wards like the waft of an angel's wing;
And she lay with a flower in one hand and her thin hands crossed on
her breast —
Wan, but as pretty as heart can desire, and we thought her at rest,

The Home Book of Verse, V1

Quietly sleeping – so quiet, our doctor said, "Poor little dear,
Nurse, I must do it to-morrow; she'll never live through it, I fear."

I walked with our kindly old doctor as far as the head of the stair,
Then I returned to the ward; the child didn't see I was there.

Never since I was nurse, had I been so grieved and so vexed!
Emmie had heard him. Softly she called from her cot to the next,
"He says I shall never live through it; O Annie, what shall I do?"
Annie considered. "If I," said the wise little Annie, "was you,
I should cry to the dear Lord Jesus to help me, for, Emmie, you see,
It's all in the picture there: 'Little children should come to Me.'" –
(Meaning the print that you gave us, I find that it always can please
Our children, the dear Lord Jesus with children about His knees.)
"Yes, and I will," said Emmie, "but then if I call to the Lord,
How should He know that it's me? such a lot of beds in the ward?"
That was a puzzle for Annie. Again she considered and said:
"Emmie, you put out your arms, and you leave 'em outside on the bed –
The Lord has so much to see to! but, Emmie, you tell it Him plain,
It's the little girl with her arms lying out on the counterpane."

I had sat three nights by the child – I could not watch her for four –
My brain had begun to reel – I felt I could do it no more.
That was my sleeping-night, but I thought that it never would pass.
There was a thunderclap once, and a clatter of hail on the glass,
And there was a phantom cry that I heard as I tossed about,
The motherless bleat of a lamb in the storm and the darkness without;
My sleep was broken besides with dreams of the dreadful knife
And fears for our delicate Emmie who scarce would escape with her life;
Then in the gray of the morning it seemed she stood by me and smiled,
And the doctor came at his hour, and we went to see the child.

He had brought his ghastly tools: we believed her asleep again –
Her dear, long, lean, little arms lying out on the counterpane; –
Say that His day is done! Ah, why should we care what they say?
The Lord of the children had heard her, and Emmie had passed away.

Alfred Tennyson [1809–1892]

"IF I WERE DEAD"

"If I were dead, you'd sometimes say, Poor Child!"
The dear lips quivered as they spake,
And the tears brake
From eyes which, not to grieve me, brightly smiled.
Poor Child, poor Child!
I seem to hear your laugh, your talk, your song.
It is not true that Love will do no wrong.
Poor Child!
And did you think, when you so cried and smiled,
How I, in lonely nights, should lie awake,
And of those words your full avengers make?
Poor Child, poor Child!
And now, unless it be
That sweet amends thrice told are come to thee,
O God, have Thou no mercy upon me!
Poor Child!

Coventry Patmore [1823–1896]

THE TOYS

My little Son, who looked from thoughtful eyes
And moved and spoke in quiet grown-up wise,
Having my law the seventh time disobeyed,
I struck him, and dismissed
With hard words and unkissed,
– His Mother, who was patient, being dead.
Then, fearing lest his grief should hinder sleep,
I visited his bed,
But found him slumbering deep,
With darkened eyelids, and their lashes yet
From his late sobbing wet.
And I, with moan,
Kissing away his tears, left others of my own;
For, on a table drawn beside his head,
He had put, within his reach,
A box of counters and a red-veined stone,
A piece of glass abraded by the beach,
And six or seven shells,
A bottle with bluebells,
And two French copper coins, ranged there with careful art,
To comfort his sad heart.
So when that night I prayed
To God, I wept, and said:
Ah, when at last we lie with tranced breath,
Not vexing Thee in death,
And Thou rememberest of what toys
We made our joys,
How weakly understood
Thy great commanded good,
Then, fatherly not less
Than I whom Thou hast moulded from the clay,
Thou'lt leave Thy wrath, and say,
"I will be sorry for their childishness."

Coventry Patmore [1823–1896]

A SONG OF TWILIGHT

Oh, to come home once more, when the dusk is falling,
To see the nursery lighted and the children's table spread;
"Mother, mother, mother!" the eager voices calling,
"The baby was so sleepy that he had to go to bed!"

Oh, to come home once more, and see the smiling faces,
Dark head, bright head, clustered at the pane;
Much the years have taken, when the heart its path retraces,
But until time is not for me, the image will remain.

Men and women now they are, standing straight and steady,
Grave heart, gay heart, fit for life's emprise;
Shoulder set to shoulder, how should they be but ready!
The future shines before them with the light of their own eyes.

Still each answers to my call; no good has been denied me,
My burdens have been fitted to the little strength that's mine,
Beauty, pride and peace have walked by day beside me,
The evening closes gently in, and how can I repine?

But oh, to see once more, when the early dusk is falling,
The nursery windows glowing and the children's table spread;
"Mother, mother, mother!" the high child voices calling,
"He couldn't stay awake for you, he had to go to bed!"

Unknown

LITTLE BOY BLUE

The little toy dog is covered with dust,
But sturdy and stanch he stands;
And the little toy soldier is red with rust,
And his musket moulds in his hands.
Time was when the little toy dog was new,
And the soldier was passing fair;
And that was the time when our Little Boy Blue
Kissed them and put them there.

"Now, don't you go till I come," he said,
"And don't you make any noise!"
So, toddling off to his trundle-bed,
He dreamt of the pretty toys;
And, as he was dreaming, an angel song
Awakened our Little Boy Blue –
Oh! the years are many, the years are long,
But the little toy friends are true!

Ay, faithful to Little Boy Blue they stand,
Each in the same old place,
Awaiting the touch of a little hand,
The smile of a little face;
And they wonder, as waiting the long years through
In the dust of that little chair,
What has become of our Little Boy Blue,
Since he kissed them and put them there.

Eugene Field [1850–1895]

THE DISCOVERER

I have a little kinsman
Whose earthly summers are but three,
And yet a voyager is he
Greater than Drake or Frobisher,
Than all their peers together!
He is a brave discoverer,
And, far beyond the tether
Of them who seek the frozen Pole,
Has sailed where the noiseless surges roll.
Ay, he has travelled whither
A winged pilot steered his bark
Through the portals of the dark,
Past hoary Mimir's well and tree,
Across the unknown sea.

Suddenly, in his fair young hour,
Came one who bore a flower,
And laid it in his dimpled hand
With this command:
"Henceforth thou art a rover!
Thou must make a voyage far,
Sail beneath the evening star,
And a wondrous land discover."
— With his sweet smile innocent
Our little kinsman went.

Since that time no word
From the absent has been heard.
Who can tell
How he fares, or answer well
What the little one has found
Since he left us, outward bound?
Would that he might return!
Then should we learn
From the pricking of his chart
How the skyey roadways part.
Hush! does not the baby this way bring,
To lay beside this severed curl,
Some starry offering
Of chrysolite or pearl?

Ah, no! not so!
We may follow on his track,
But he comes not back.
And yet I dare aver
He is a brave discoverer

Of climes his elders do not know.
He has more learning than appears
On the scroll of twice three thousand years,
More than in the groves is taught,
Or from furthest Indies brought;
He knows, perchance, how spirits fare, –
What shapes the angels wear,
What is their guise and speech
In those lands beyond our reach, –
And his eyes behold
Things that shall never, never be to mortal hearers told.

Edmund Clarence Stedman [1833–1908]

A CHRYSALIS

My little Madchen found one day
A curious something in her play,
That was not fruit, nor flower, nor seed;
It was not anything that grew,
Or crept, or climbed, or swam, or flew;
Had neither legs nor wings, indeed;
And yet she was not sure, she said,
Whether it was alive or dead.

She brought in her tiny hand
To see if I would understand,
And wondered when I made reply,
"You've found a baby butterfly."
"A butterfly is not like this,"
With doubtful look she answered me.
So then I told her what would be
Some day within the chrysalis;
How, slowly, in the dull brown thing
Now still as death, a spotted wing,
And then another, would unfold,
Till from the empty shell would fly
A pretty creature, by and by,
All radiant in blue and gold.

"And will it, truly?" questioned she –
Her laughing lips and eager eyes
All in a sparkle of surprise –
"And shall your little Madchen see?"
"She shall! I said. How could I tell
That ere the worm within its shell
Its gauzy, splendid wings had spread,
My little Madchen would be dead?"

To-day the butterfly has flown, –
She was not here to see it fly, –
And sorrowing I wonder why
The empty shell is mine alone.
Perhaps the secret lies in this:
I too had found a chrysalis,
And Death that robbed me of delight
Was but the radiant creature's flight!

Mary Emily Bradley [1835–1898]

MATER DOLOROSA

I'd a dream to-night
As I fell asleep,
O! the touching sight
Makes me still to weep:
Of my little lad,
Gone to leave me sad,
Ay, the child I had,
But was not to keep.

As in heaven high,
I my child did seek,
There in train came by
Children fair and meek,
Each in lily white,
With a lamp alight;
Each was clear to sight,
But they did not speak.

Then, a little sad,
Came my child in turn,
But the lamp he had,
O it did not burn!
He, to clear my doubt,
Said, half-turned about,
"Your tears put it out;
Mother, never mourn."

William Barnes [1801–1886]

THE LITTLE GHOST

The stars began to peep
Gone was the bitter day.
She heard the milky ewes
Bleat to their lambs astray.
Her heart cried for her lamb
Lapped cold in the churchyard sod,
She could not think on the happy children
At play with the Lamb of God.

She heard the calling ewes
And the lambs' answer, alas!
She heard her heart's blood drip in the night
As the ewes' milk on the grass.
Her tears that burnt like fire
So bitter and slow ran down
She could not think on the new-washed children
Playing by Mary's gown.

Oh who is this comes in
Over her threshold stone?
And why is the old dog wild with joy
Who all day long made moan?
This fair little radiant ghost,
Her one little son of seven,
New 'scaped from the band of merry children
In the nurseries of Heaven.

He was all clad in white
Without a speck or stain;
His curls had a ring of light
That rose and fell again.
"Now come with me, my own mother,
And you shall have great ease,
For you shall see the lost children
Gathered to Mary's knees."

Oh, lightly sprang she up
Nor waked her sleeping man,
And hand in hand with the little ghost
Through the dark night she ran.
She is gone swift as a fawn,
As a bird homes to its nest,
She has seen them lie, the sleepy children
Twixt Mary's arm and breast.

At morning she came back;

Her eyes were strange to see.
She will not fear the long journey,
However long it be.
As she goes in and out
She sings unto hersel';
For she has seen the mothers' children
And knows that it is well.

Katherine Tynan Hinkson [1861–1931]

MOTHERHOOD

The night throbs on; O, let me pray, dear lad!
Crush off his name a moment from my mouth.
To Thee my eyes would turn, but they go back,
Back to my arm beside me, where he lay –
So little, Lord, so little and so warm!

I cannot think that Thou hadst need of him!
He was so little, Lord, he cannot sing,
He cannot praise Thee; all his life had learned
Was to hold fast my kisses in the night.

Give him to me – he is not happy there!
He had not felt this life; his lovely eyes
Just knew me for his mother, and he died.

Hast Thou an angel there to mother him?
I say he loves me best – if he forgets,
If Thou allow it that my child forgets
And runs not out to meet me when I come –

What are my curses to Thee? Thou hast heard
The curse of Abel's mother, and since then
We have not ceased to threaten at Thy throne,
To threat and pray Thee that Thou hold them still
In memory of us.

See Thou tend him well,
Thou God of all the mothers. If he lack
One of his kisses – ah, my heart, my heart,
Do angels kiss in heaven? Give him back!

Forgive me, Lord, but I am sick with grief,
And tired of tears, and cold to comforting.
Thou art wise, I know, and tender, aye, and good,
Thou hast my child, and he is safe in Thee,
And I believe –

Ah, God, my child shall go
Orphaned among the angels! All alone.
So little and alone! He knows not Thee,
He only knows his mother – give him back.

Josephine Daskam Bacon [1876–

THE MOTHER'S PRAYER

The good Lord gave, the Lord has taken from me,
Blessed be His name, His holy will be done.
The mourners all have gone, all save I, his mother,
The little grave lies lonely in the sun.

Nay! I would not follow, though they did beseech me,
For the angels come now waiting for my dead.
Heaven's door is open, so my whispers soar there,
While the gentle angels lift him from his bed.

Oh Lord, when Thou gavest he was weak and helpless,
Could not rise nor wander from my shielding arm;
Lovely is he now and strong with four sweet summers,
Laughing, running, tumbling, hard to keep from harm.

If some tender mother, whose babe on earth is living,
Takes his little hand to guide his stranger feet
'Mid the countless hosts that cross the floor of heaven,
Thou wilt not reprove her for Thy pity sweet.

If upon her breast she holds his baby beauty,
All his golden hair will fall about her hand,
Laughing let her fingers pull it into ringlets –
Long and lovely ringlets. She will understand.

Wilful are his ways and full of merry mischief;
If he prove unruly, lay the blame on me.
Never did I chide him for his noise or riot,
Smiled upon his folly, glad his joy to see.

Each eve shall I come beside his bed so lowly;
"Hush–a–by, my baby," softly shall I sing,
So, if he be frightened, full of sleep and anger,
The song he loved shall reach him and sure comfort bring.

Lord, if in my praying, Thou shouldst hear me weeping,
Ever was I wayward, always full of tears,
Take no heed of this grief. Sweet the gift Thou gavest
All the cherished treasure of those golden years.

Do not, therefore, hold me to Thy will ungrateful:
Soon I shall stand upright, smiling, strong, and brave,
With a son in heaven the sad earth forgetting,
But 'tis lonely yet, Lord, by the little grave.
Oh, 'tis lonely, lonely, by the little grave!

Dora Sigerson Shorter [1862–1918]

DA LEETLA BOY

Da spreeng ees com'; but oh, da joy
Eet ees too late!
He was so cold, my leetla boy,
He no could wait.

I no can count how manny week,
How manny day, dat he ees seeck;
How manny night I seet an' hold
Da leetla hand dat was so cold.
He was so patience, oh, so sweet!
Eet hurts my throat for theenk of eet;
An' all he evra ask ees w'en
Ees gona com' da spreeng agen.
Wan day, wan brighta sunny day,
He see, across da alleyway,
Da leetla girl dat's livin' dere
Ees raise her window for da air,
An' put outside a leetla pot
Of – w'at–you–call? – forgat–me–not.
So smalla flower, so leetla theeng!
But steell eet mak' hees hearta seeng:
"Oh, now, at las', ees com' da spreeng!
Da leetla plant ees glad for know
Da sun ees com' for mak' eet grow.
So, too, I am grow warm and strong."
So lika dat he seeng hees song.
But, ah! da night com' down an' den
Da weenter ees sneak back agen,
An' een da alley all da night
Ees fall da snow, so cold, so white,
An' cover up da leetla pot
Of – w'at–you–call? – forgat–me–not.
All night da leetla hand I hold
Ees grow so cold, so cold, so cold!

Da spreeng ees com'; but, oh, da joy
Eet ees too late!
He was so cold, my leetla boy,
He no could wait.

Thomas Augustin Daly [1871–

ON THE MOOR

I

I met a child upon the moor
A-wading down the heather;
She put her hand into my own,
We crossed the fields together.

I led her to her father's door –
A cottage midst the clover.
I left her – and the world grew poor
To me, a childless rover.

II

I met a maid upon the moor,
The morrow was her wedding.
Love lit her eyes with lovelier hues
Than the eve-star was shedding.

She looked a sweet good-bye to me,
And o'er the stile went singing.
Down all the lonely night I heard
But bridal bells a-ringing.

III

I met a mother on the moor,
By a new grave a-praying.
The happy swallows in the blue

Upon the winds were playing.

"Would I were in his grave," I said,
"And he beside her standing!"
There was no heart to break if death
For me had made demanding.

Cale Young Rice [1872–

EPITAPH OF DIONYSIA

Here doth Dionysia lie:
She whose little wanton foot,
Tripping (ah, too carelessly!)
Touched this tomb, and fell into 't.

Trip no more shall she, nor fall.
And her trippings were so few!
Summers only eight in all
Had the sweet child wandered through.

But, already, life's few suns
Love's strong seeds had ripened warm.
All her ways were winning ones;
All her cunning was to charm.

And the fancy, in the flower,
While the flesh was in the bud,
Childhood's dawning sex did dower
With warm gusts of womanhood.

Oh what joys by hope begun,
Oh what kisses kissed by thought,
What love—deeds by fancy done,
Death to endless dust hath wrought!

Had the fates been kind as thou,
Who, till now, was never cold,
Once Love's aptest scholar, now
Thou hadst been his teacher bold;

But, if buried seeds upthrow
Fruits and flowers; if flower and fruit
By their nature fitly show
What the seeds are, whence they shoot,

Dionysia, o'er this tomb,
Where thy buried beauties be,
From their dust shall spring and bloom
Loves and graces like to thee.

Unknown

FOR CHARLIE'S SAKE

The night is late, the house is still;
The angels of the hour fulfil
Their tender ministries, and move
From couch to couch in cares of love.
They drop into thy dreams, sweet wife,
The happiest smile of Charlie's life,
And lay on baby's lips a kiss,
Fresh from his angel-brother's bliss;
And, as they pass, they seem to make
A strange, dim hymn, "For Charlie's sake."

My listening heart takes up the strain,
And gives it to the night again,
Fitted with words of lowly praise,
And patience learned of mournful days,
And memories of the dead child's ways.
His will be done, His will be done!
Who gave and took away my son,
In "the far land" to shine and sing
Before the Beautiful, the King,
Who every day doth Christmas make,
All starred and belled for Charlie's sake.

For Charlie's sake I will arise;
I will anoint me where he lies,
And change my raiment, and go in
To the Lord's house, and leave my sin
Without, and seat me at his board,
Eat, and be glad, and praise the Lord.
For wherefore should I fast and weep,
And sullen moods of mourning keep?
I cannot bring him back, nor he,
For any calling, come to me.
The bond the angel Death did sign,
God sealed – for Charlie's sake, and mine.

I'm very poor – this slender stone
Marks all the narrow field I own;
Yet, patient husbandman, I till
With faith and prayers, that precious hill,
Sow it with penitential pains,
And, hopeful, wait the latter rains;
Content if, after all, the spot
Yield barely one forget-me-not –
Whether or figs or thistles make
My crop, content for Charlie's sake.

I have no houses, builded well –
Only that little lonesome cell,
Where never romping playmates come,
Nor bashful sweethearts, cunning–dumb –
An April burst of girls and boys,
Their rainbowed cloud of glooms and joys
Born with their songs, gone with their toys;
Nor ever is its stillness stirred
By purr of cat, or chirp of bird,
Or mother's twilight legend, told
Of Horner's pie, or Tiddler's gold,
Or fairy hobbling to the door,
Red–cloaked and weird, banned and poor,
To bless the good child's gracious eyes,
The good child's wistful charities,
And crippled changeling's hunch to make
Dance on his crutch, for good child's sake.

How is it with the child? 'Tis well;
Nor would I any miracle
Might stir my sleeper's tranquil trance,
Or plague his painless countenance:
I would not any seer might place
His staff on my immortal's face,
Or lip to lip, and eye to eye,
Charm back his pale mortality.
No, Shunamite! I would not break
God's stillness. Let them weep who wake.

For Charlie's sake my lot is blest:
No comfort like his mother's breast,
No praise like hers; no charm expressed
In fairest forms hath half her zest.
For Charlie's sake this bird's caressed
That death left lonely in the nest;
For Charlie's sake my heart is dressed,
As for its birthday, in its best;
For Charlie's sake we leave the rest
To Him who gave, and who did take,
And saved us twice, for Charlie's sake.

John Williamson Palmer [1825–1906]

"ARE THE CHILDREN AT HOME?"

Each day, when the glow of sunset
Fades in the western sky,
And the wee ones, tired of playing,
Go tripping lightly by,
I steal away from my husband,
Asleep in his easy-chair,
And watch from the open doorway
Their faces fresh and fair.

Alone in the dear old homestead
That once was full of life,
Ringing with girlish laughter,
Echoing boyish strife,
We two are waiting together;
And oft, as the shadows come,
With tremulous voice he calls me,
"It is night! are the children home?"

"Yes, love!" I answer him gently,
"They're all home long ago;" –
And I sing, in my quivering treble,
A song so soft and low,
Till the old man drops to slumber,
With his head upon his hand,
And I tell to myself the number
At home in the better land.

At home, where never a sorrow
Shall dim their eyes with tears!
Where the smile of God is on them
Through all the summer years!
I know, – yet my arms are empty,
That fondly folded seven,
And the mother-heart within me
Is almost starved for heaven.

Sometimes, in the dusk of evening,
I only shut my eyes,
And the children are all about me,
A vision from the skies:
The babes whose dimpled fingers
Lost the way to my breast,
And the beautiful ones, the angels,
Passed to the world of the blest.

With never a cloud upon them,

I see their radiant brows;
My boys that I gave to freedom, –
The red sword sealed their vows!
In a tangled Southern forest,
Twin brothers bold and brave,
They fell; and the flag they died for,
Thank God! floats over their grave.

A breath, and the vision is lifted
Away on wings of light,
And again we two are together,
All alone in the night.
They tell me his mind is failing,
But I smile at idle fears;
He is only back with the children,
In the dear and peaceful years.

And still, as the summer sunset
Fades away in the west,
And the wee ones, tired of playing,
Go trooping home to rest,
My husband calls from his corner,
"Say, love, have the children come?"
And I answer, with eyes uplifted,
"Yes, dear! they are all at home."

Margaret Sangster [1838–1919]

THE MORNING-GLORY

We wretched about our darling's head
The morning-glory bright;
Her little face looked out beneath,
So full of life and light,
So lit as with a sunrise,
That we could only say,
"She is the morning-glory true,
And her poor types are they."

So always from that happy time
We called her by their name,
And very fitting did it seem –
For, sure as morning came,
Behind her cradle bars she smiled
To catch the first faint ray,
As from the trellis smiles the flower
And opens to the day.

But not so beautiful they rear
Their airy cups of blue,
As turned her sweet eyes to the light,
Brimmed with sleep's tender dew;
And not so close their tendrils fine
Round their supports are thrown,
As those dear arms whose outstretched plea
Clasped all hearts to her own.

We used to think how she had come,
Even as comes the flower,
The last and perfect added gift
To crown Love's morning hour;
And how in her was imaged forth
The love we could not say,
As on the little dewdrops round
Shines back the heart of day.

We never could have thought, O God,
That she must wither up,
Almost before a day was flown,
Like the morning-glory's cup;
We never thought to see her droop
Her fair and noble head,
Till she lay stretched before our eyes,
Wilted, and cold, and dead!

The morning-glory's blossoming

Will soon be coming round –
We see the rows of heart-shaped leaves
Upspringing from the ground;
The tender things the winter killed
Renew again their birth,
But the glory of our morning
Has passed away from earth.

O Earth! in vain our aching eyes
Stretch over thy green plain!
Too harsh thy dews, too gross thine air
Her spirit to sustain;
But up in groves of Paradise
Full surely we shall see
Our morning-glory beautiful
Twine round our dear Lord's knee.

Maria White Lowell [1821–1855]

SHE CAME AND WENT

As a twig trembles, which a bird
Lights on to sing, then leaves unbent,
So is my memory thrilled and stirred; –
I only know she came and went.

As clasps some lake, by gusts unriven,
The blue dome's measureless content,
So my soul held that moment's heaven; –
I only know she came and went.

As, at one bound, our swift spring heaps
The orchards full of bloom and scent,
So clove her May my wintry sleeps; –
I only know she came and went.

An angel stood and met my gaze,
Through the low doorway of my tent;
The tent is struck, the vision stays; –
I only know she came and went.

Oh, when the room grows slowly dim,
And life's last oil is nearly spent,
One gush of light these eyes will brim,
Only to think she came and went.

James Russell Lowell [1819–1891]

THE FIRST SNOW-FALL

The snow had begun in the gloaming,
And busily all the night
Had been heaping field and highway
With a silence deep and white.

Every pine and fir and hemlock
Wore ermine too dear for an earl,
And the poorest twig on the elm-tree
Was ridged inch deep with pearl.

From sheds new-roofed with Carrara
Came Chanticleer's muffled crow,
The stiff rails softened to swan's-down,
And still fluttered down the snow.

I stood and watched by the window
The noiseless work of the sky,
And the sudden flurries of snow-birds,
Like brown leaves whirling by.

I thought of a mound in sweet Auburn
Where a little headstone stood;
How the flakes were folding it gently,
As did robins the babes in the wood.

Up spoke our own little Mabel,
Saying, "Father, who makes it snow?"
And I told of the good All-father
Who cares for us here below.

Again I looked at the snow-fall,
And thought of the leaden sky
That arched o'er our first great sorrow,
When that mound was heaped so high.

I remembered the gradual patience
That fell from that cloud like snow,
Flake by flake, healing and hiding
The scar that renewed our woe.

And again to the child I whispered,
"The snow that husheth all,
Darling, the merciful Father
Alone can make it fall"

Then, with eyes that saw not, I kissed her;

And she, kissing back, could not know
That my kiss was given to her sister,
Folded close under deepening snow.

James Russell Lowell [1819–1891]

"WE ARE SEVEN"

A simple Child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?

I met a little cottage Girl:
She was eight years old, she said:
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.

She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad:
Her eyes were fair, and very fair;
– Her beauty made me glad.

"Sisters and brothers, little Maid,
How many may you be?"
"How many? Seven in all," she said,
And wondering looked at me.

"And where are they? I pray you tell."
She answered, "Seven are we;

And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea;

"Two of us in the church–yard lie,
My sister and my brother;
And, in the church–yard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother."

"You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,

Yet ye are seven – I pray you tell,
Sweet Maid, how this may be."

Then did the little Maid reply,
"Seven boys and girls are we;
Two of us in the church–yard lie
Beneath the church–yard tree."

"You run about, my little Maid;
Your limbs they are alive;
If two are in the church–yard laid,
Then ye are only five."

"Their graves are green, they may be seen,"
The little Maid replied:
"Twelve steps or more from my mother's door,
And they are side by side.

"My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem;
And there upon the ground I sit,
And sing a song to them.

"And often after sunset, Sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there.

"The first that died was sister Jane;
In bed she moaning lay,
Till God released her of her pain;
And then she went away.

"So in the church-yard she was laid;
And, when the grass was dry,
Together round her grave we played,
My brother John and I.

"And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side."

"How many are you, then," said I,
"If they two are in heaven?"
Quick was the little Maid's reply,
"O Master! we are seven."

"But they are dead; those two are dead!
Their spirits are in heaven!"
'Twas throwing words away; for still
The little Maid would have her will,
And said, "Nay, we are seven!"

William Wordsworth [1770–1850]

MY CHILD

I cannot make him dead!
His fair sunshiny head
Is ever bounding round my study chair;
Yet when my eyes, now dim
With tears, I turn to him,
The vision vanishes, – he is not there!

I walk my parlor floor,
And, through the open door,
I hear a footfall on the chamber stair;
I'm stepping toward the hall
To give my boy a call;
And then bethink me that – he is not there!

I thread the crowded street;
A satchelled lad I meet,
With the same beaming eyes and colored hair;
And, as he's running by,
Follow him with my eye,
Scarcely believing that – he is not there!

I know his face is hid
Under the coffin-lid;
Closed are his eyes; cold is his forehead fair;
My hand that marble felt;
O'er it in prayer I knelt;
Yet my heart whispers that – he is not there!

I cannot make him dead!
When passing by the bed,
So long watched over with parental care,
My spirit and my eye,
Seek him inquiringly,
Before the thought comes that – he is not there!

When, at the cool gray break
Of day, from sleep I wake,
With my first breathing of the morning air
My soul goes up, with joy,
To Him who gave my boy;
Then comes the sad thought that – he is not there!

When at the day's calm close,
Before we seek repose,
I'm with his mother, offering up our prayer;
Whate'er I may be saying,

I am, in spirit, praying
For our boy's spirit, though – he is not there!

Not there! – Where, then, is he?
The form I used to see
Was but the raiment that he used to wear.
The grave, that now doth press
Upon that cast-off dress,
Is but his wardrobe locked; – he is not there!

He lives! – In all the past
He lives; nor, to the last,
Of seeing him again will I despair;
In dreams I see him now;
And on his angel brow,
I see it written, "Thou shalt see me there!"

Yes, we all live to God!
Father, thy chastening rod
So help us, thine afflicted ones, to bear,
That, in the spirit-land,
Meeting at thy right hand,
'Twill be our heaven to find that – he is there!

John Pierpont [1785–1866]

THE CHILD'S WISH GRANTED

Do you remember, my sweet, absent son,
How in the soft June days forever done
You loved the heavens so warm and clear and high;
And when I lifted you, soft came your cry, –
"Put me 'way up – 'way, 'way up in blue sky"?

I laughed and said I could not; – set you down,
Your gray eyes wonder-filled beneath that crown
Of bright hair gladdening me as you raced by.
Another Father now, more strong than I,
Has borne you voiceless to your dear blue sky.

George Parsons Lathrop [1851–1898]

CHALLENGE

This little child, so white, so calm,
Decked for her grave,
Encountered death without a qualm.
Are you as brave?

So small, and armed with naught beside
Her mother's kiss,
Alone she stepped, unterrified,
Into the abyss.

"Ah," you explain, "she did not know –
This babe of four –
Just what it signifies to go."
Do you know more?

Kenton Foster Murray [18 –

TIRED MOTHERS

A little elbow leans upon your knee,
Your tired knee that has so much to bear;
A child's dear eyes are looking lovingly
From underneath a thatch of tangled hair.
Perhaps you do not heed the velvet touch
Of warm, moist fingers, folding yours so tight;
You do not prize this blessing overmuch, –
You almost are too tired to pray to–night.

But it is blessedness! A year ago
I did not see it as I do to–day, –
We are so dull and thankless; and too slow
To catch the sunshine till it slips away.
And now it seems surpassing strange to me
That, while I wore the badge of motherhood,
I did not kiss more oft and tenderly
The little child that brought me only good.

And if some night when you sit down to rest,
You miss this elbow from your tired knee, –
This restless, curling head from off your breast –
This lisping tongue that chatters constantly;
If from your own the dimpled hands had slipped,
And ne'er would nestle in your palm again;
If the white feet into, their grave had tripped,
I could not blame you for your heartache then!

I wonder so that mothers ever fret
At little children clinging to their gown;
Or that the footprints, when the days are wet,
Are ever black enough to make them frown.
If I could find a little muddy boot,
Or cap, or jacket, on my chamber–floor, –
If I could kiss a rosy, restless foot,
And hear its patter in my house once more, –

If I could mend a broken cart to–day,
To–morrow make a kite to reach the sky,
There is no woman in God's world could say
She was more blissfully content than I.
But ah! the dainty pillow next my own
Is never rumbled by a shining head;
My singing birdling from its nest has flown,
The little boy I used to kiss is dead.

May Riley Smith [1842–1927]

MY DAUGHTER LOUISE

In the light of the moon, by the side of the water,
My seat on the sand and her seat on my knees,
We watch the bright billows, do I and my daughter,
My sweet little daughter Louise.
We wonder what city the pathway of glory,
That broadens away to the limitless west,
Leads up to – she minds her of some pretty story
And says: "To the city that mortals love best."
Then I say: "It must lead to the far away city,
The beautiful City of Rest."

In the light of the moon, by the side of the water,
Stand two in the shadow of whispering trees,
And one loves my daughter, my beautiful daughter,
My womanly daughter Louise.
She steps to the boat with a touch of his fingers,
And out on the diamonded pathway they move;
The shallop is lost in the distance, it lingers,
It waits, but I know that its coming will prove
That it went to the walls of the wonderful city,
The magical City of Love.

In the light of the moon, by the side of the water,
I wait for her coming from over the seas;
I wait but to welcome the dust of my daughter,
To weep for my daughter Louise.
The path, as of old, reaching out in its splendor,
Gleams bright, like a way that an angel has trod;
I kiss the cold burden its billows surrender,
Sweet clay to lie under the pitiful sod:
But she rests, at the end of the path, in the city
Whose "builder and maker is God."

Homer Greene [1853–

"I AM LONELY"

From "The Spanish Gypsy"

The world is great: the birds all fly from me,
The stars are golden fruit upon a tree
All out of reach: my little sister went,
And I am lonely.

The world is great: I tried to mount the hill
Above the pines, where the light lies so still,
But it rose higher: little Lisa went
And I am lonely.

The world is great: the wind comes rushing by.
I wonder where it comes from; sea birds cry
And hurt my heart: my little sister went,
And I am lonely.

The world is great: the people laugh and talk,
And make loud holiday: how fast they walk!
I'm lame, they push me: little Lisa went,
And I am lonely.

George Eliot [1819–1880]

SONNETS

From "Mimma Bella"

I

Have dark Egyptians stolen Thee away,
Oh Baby, Baby, in whose cot we peer
As down some empty gulf that opens sheer
And fathomless, illumined by no ray?
And wilt thou come, on some far distant day,
With unknown face, and say, "Behold! I'm here,
The child you lost;" while we in sudden fear,
Dumb with great doubt, shall find no word to say?
One darker than dark gipsy holds thee fast;
One whose strong fingers none has forced apart
Since first they closed on things that were too fair;
Nor shall we see thee other than thou wast,
But such as thou art printed in the heart,
In changeless baby loveliness still there.

II

Two springs she saw – two radiant Tuscan springs,
What time the wild red tulips are aflame
In the new wheat, and wreaths of young vine frame
The daffodils that every light breeze swings;
And the anemones that April brings
Make purple pools, as if Adonis came
Just there to die; and Florence scrolls her name
In every blossom Primavera flings.
Now, when the scented iris, straight and tall,
Shall hedge the garden gravel once again
With pale blue flags, at May's exulting call,
And when the amber roses, wet with rain,
Shall tapestry the old gray villa wall,
We, left alone, shall seek one bud in vain.

IV

Oh, rosy as the lining of a shell
Were the wee hands that now are white as snows;
And like pink coral, with their elfin toes,
The feet that on life's brambles never fell.
And with its tiny smile, adorable
The mouth that never knew life's bitter sloes;
And like the incurved petal of a rose
The little ear, now deaf in Death's strong spell.
Now, while the seasons in their order roll,
And sun and rain pour down from God's great dome,
And deathless stars shine nightly overhead,
Near other children, with her little doll,

She waits the wizard that will never come
To wake the sleep-struck playground of the dead.

VI

Oh, bless the law that veils the Future's face;
For who could smile into a baby's eyes,
Or bear the beauty of the evening skies,
If he could see what cometh on apace?
The ticking of the death-watch would replace
The baby's prattle, for the over-wise;
The breeze's murmur would become the cries
Of stormy petrels where the breakers race.
We live as moves the walker in his sleep,
Who walks because he sees not the abyss
His feet are skirting as he goes his way:
If we could see the morrow from the steep
Of our security, the soul would miss
Its footing, and fall headlong from to-day.

VIII

One day, I mind me, now that she is dead,
When nothing warned us of the dark decree,
I crooned, to lull her, in a minor key,
Such fancies as first came into my head.
I crooned them low, beside her little bed;
And the refrain was somehow "Come with me,
And we will wander by the purple sea;"
I crooned it, and – God help me! – felt no dread.
O Purple Sea, beyond the stress of storms,
Where never ripple breaks upon the shore
Of Death's pale Isles of Twilight as they dream,
Give back, give back, O Sea of Nevermore,
The frailest of the unsubstantial forms
That leave the shores that are for those that seem!

XX

What essences from Idumean palm,
What ambergris, what sacerdotal wine,
What Arab myrrh, what spikenard, would be thine,
If I could swathe thy memory in such balm!
Oh, for wrecked gold, from depths for ever calm,
To fashion for thy name a fretted shrine;
Oh, for strange gems, still locked in virgin mine,
To stud the pyx, where thought would bring sweet psalm!
I have but this small rosary of rhyme, –
No rubies but heart's drops, no pearls but tears,
To lay upon the altar of thy name,
O Mimma Bella; – on the shrine that Time
Makes ever holier for the soul, while years
Obliterate the rolls of human fame.

Eugene Lee-Hamilton [1845-1907]

ROSE-MARIE OF THE ANGELS

Little Sister Rose-Marie,
Will thy feet as willing-light
Run through Paradise, I wonder,
As they run the blue skies under,
Willing feet, so airy-light?

Little Sister Rose-Marie,
Will thy voice as bird-note clear
Lift and ripple over Heaven
As its mortal sound is given,
Swift bird-voice, so young and clear?

How God will be glad of thee,
Little Sister Rose-Marie!

Adelaide Crapsey [1878-1914]

MAIDENHOOD

MAIDENHOOD

Maiden! with the meek, brown eyes,
In whose orbs a shadow lies
Like the dusk in evening skies!

Thou whose locks outshine the sun,
Golden tresses, wreathed in one,
As the braided streamlets run!

Standing, with reluctant feet,
Where the brook and river meet,
Womanhood and childhood fleet!

Gazing, with, a timid glance,
On the brooklet's swift advance,
On the river's broad expanse!

Deep and still, that gliding stream
Beautiful to thee must seem,
As the river of a dream.

Then why pause with indecision,
When bright angels in thy vision
Beckon thee to fields Elysian?

Seest thou shadows sailing by,
As the dove, with startled eye,
Sees the falcon's shadow fly?

Hearst thou voices on the shore,
That our ears perceive no more,
Deafened by the cataract's roar?

Oh, thou child of many prayers!
Life hath quicksands, – Life hath snares!
Care and age come unawares!

Like the swell of some sweet tune,
Morning rises into noon,
May glides onward into June.

Childhood is the bough, where slumbered
Birds and blossoms many-numbered; –
Age, that bough with snows encumbered.

Gather, then, each flower that grows,
When the young heart overflows,

To embalm that tent of snows.

Bear a lily in thy hand;
Gates of brass cannot withstand
One touch of that magic wand.

Bear through sorrow, wrong, and ruth,
In thy heart the dew of youth,
On thy lips the smile of truth.

Oh, that dew, like balm, shall steal
Into wounds that cannot heal,
Even as sleep our eyes doth seal;

And that smile, like sunshine, dart
Into many a sunless heart
For a smile of God thou art.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow [1807–1882]

TO THE VIRGINS, TO MAKE MUCH OF TIME

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying:
And this same flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,
The higher he's a-getting,
The sooner will his race be run,
And nearer he's to setting,

That age is best which is the first,
When youth and blood are warmer;
But being spent, the worse, and worst
Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time,
And while ye may, go marry:
For having lost but once your prime,
You may for ever tarry.

Robert Herrick [1591–1674]

TO MISTRESS MARGARET HUSSEY

Merry Margaret
As midsummer flower,
Gentle as falcon,
Or hawk of the tower:
With solace and gladness,
Much mirth and no madness,
All good and no badness;
So joyously,
So maidenly,
So womanly
Her demeaning
In every thing,
Far, far passing
That I can indite,
Or suffice to write
Of merry Margaret
As midsummer flower,
Gentle as falcon,
Or hawk of the tower,
As patient and still
And as full of good will
As fair Isaphill,
Coliander,
Sweet pomander,
Good Cassander;
Steadfast of thought,
Well made, well wrought,
Far may be sought,
Eye that ye can find
So courteous, so kind,
As merry Margaret,
This midsummer flower,
Gentle as falcon,
Or hawk of the tower.

John Skelton [1460?–1529]

ON HER COMING TO LONDON

What's she, so late from Penshurst come,
More gorgeous than the mid-day sun,
That all the world amazes?
Sure 'tis some angel from above,
Or 'tis the Cyprian Queen of Love
Attended by the Graces.

Or is't not Juno, Heaven's great dame,
Or Pallas armed, as on she came
To assist the Greeks in fight,
Or Cynthia, that huntress bold,
Or from old Tithon's bed so cold,
Aurora chasing night?

No, none of those, yet one that shall
Compare, perhaps exceed them all,
For beauty, wit, and birth;
As good as great, as chaste as fair,
A brighter nymph none breathes the air,
Or treads upon the earth.

'Tis Dorothee, a maid high-born,
And lovely as the blushing morn,
Of noble Sidney's race;
Oh! could you see into her mind,
The beauties there locked-up outshine
The beauties of her face.

Fair Dorothea, sent from heaven
To add more wonders to the seven,
And glad each eye and ear,
Crown of her sex, the Muse's port,
The glory of our English court,
The brightness of our sphere.

To welcome her the Spring breathes forth
Elysian sweets, March strews the earth
With violets and posies,
The sun renews his darting fires,
April puts on her best attires,
And May her crown of roses.

Go, happy maid, increase the store
Of graces born with you, and more
Add to their number still;
So neither all-consuming age,

Nor envy's blast, nor fortune's rage
Shall ever work you ill.

Edmund Waller [1606–1687]

"O, SAW YE BONNY LESLEY"

O saw ye bonny Lesley
As she gaed owre the Border?
She's gane, like Alexander,
To spread her conquests farther.

To see her is to love her,
And love but her for ever;
For nature made her what she is,
And ne'er made sic anither!

Thou art a queen, fair Lesley,
Thy subjects we, before thee;
Thou art divine, fair Lesley,
The hearts o' men adore thee.

The deil he couldna scaith thee,
Or aught that wad belang thee;
He'd look into thy bonny face,
And say, "I canna wrang thee!"

The powers aboon will tent thee;
Misfortune sha' na steer thee;
Thou'rt like themselves sae lovely
That ill they'll ne'er let near thee.

Return again, fair Lesley,
Return to Caledonie!
That we may brag we hae a lass
There's nane again sae bonny.

Robert Burns [1759–1796]

TO A YOUNG LADY

Sweet stream, that winds through yonder glade,
Apt emblem of a virtuous maid! –
Silent and chaste she steals along,
Far from the world's gay busy throng:
With gentle yet prevailing force,
Intent upon her destined course;
Graceful and useful all she does,
Blessing and blest where'er she goes;
Pure-bosomed as that watery glass,
And Heaven reflected in her face!

William Cowper [1731–1800]

RUTH

She stood breast high among the corn,
Clasped by the golden light of morn,
Like the sweetheart of the sun,
Who many a glowing kiss had won.

On her cheek an autumn flush,
Deeply ripened; – such a blush
In the midst of brown was born,
Like red poppies grown with corn.

Round her eyes her tresses fell,
Which were blackest none could tell.
But long lashes veiled a light,
That had else been all too bright.

And her hat, with shady brim,
Made her tressy forehead dim;
Thus she stood amid the stooks,
Praising God with sweetest looks:

Sure, I said, Heaven did not mean,
Where I reap thou shouldst but glean;
Lay thy sheaf adown and come,
Share my harvest and my home.

Thomas Hood [1799–1845]

THE SOLITARY REAPER

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of Travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again!

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending; –
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

William Wordsworth [1770–1850]

THE THREE COTTAGE GIRLS

I

How blest the Maid whose heart – yet free
From Love's uneasy sovereignty –
Beats with a fancy running high,
Her simple cares to magnify;
Whom Labor, never urged to toil,
Hath cherished on a healthful soil;
Who knows not pomp, who heeds not pelf;
Whose heaviest sin it is to look
Askance upon her pretty Self
Reflected in some crystal brook;
Whom grief hath spared – who sheds no tear
But in sweet pity; and can hear
Another's praise from envy clear.

II

Such (but O lavish Nature! why
That dark unfathomable eye,
Where lurks a Spirit that replies
To stillest mood of softest skies,
Yet hints at peace to be o'erthrown,
Another's first, and then her own?)
Such haply, yon Italian Maid,
Our Lady's laggard Votaress,
Halting beneath the chestnut shade
To accomplish there her loveliness:
Nice aid maternal fingers lend;
A Sister serves with slacker hand;
Then, glittering like a star, she joins the festal band.

III

How blest (if truth may entertain
Coy fancy with a bolder strain)
The Helvetian Girl – who daily braves,
In her light skiff, the tossing waves,
And quits the bosom of the deep
Only to climb the rugged steep!
– Say whence that modulated shout!
From Wood–nymph of Diana's throng?
Or does the greeting to a rout
Of giddy Bacchanals belong?
Jubilant outcry! rock and glade
Resounded – but the voice obeyed
The breath of an Helvetian Maid.

IV

Her beauty dazzles the thick wood;
Her courage animates the flood;
Her steps the elastic greensward meets
Returning unreluctant sweets;
The mountains (as ye heard) rejoice
Aloud, saluted by her voice!
Blithe Paragon of Alpine grace,
Be as thou art – for through thy veins
The blood of Heroes runs its race!
And nobly wilt thou brook the chains
That, for the virtuous, Life prepares;
The fetter which the Matron wears;
The patriot Mother's weight of anxious cares!

"Sweet Highland Girl! a very shower
Of beauty was thy earthly dower,"
When thou didst flit before mine eyes,
Gay Vision under sullen skies,
While Hope and Love around thee played,
Near the rough falls of Inversneyd!
Have they, who nursed the blossom, seen
No breach of promise in the fruit?
Was joy, in following joy, as keen
As grief can be in grief's pursuit?
When youth had flown did hope still bless
Thy goings – or the cheerfulness
Of innocence survive to mitigate distress?

VI

But from our course why turn – to tread
A way with shadows overspread;
Where what we gladliest would believe
Is feared as what may most deceive?
Bright Spirit, not with amaranth crowned
But heath-bells from thy native ground,
Time cannot thin thy flowing hair,
Nor take one ray of light from Thee;
For in my Fancy thou dost share
The gift of immortality;
And there shall bloom, with Thee allied,
The Votaress by Lugano's side;
And that intrepid Nymph, on Uri's steep descried!

William Wordsworth [1770–1850]

BLACKMWORE MAIDENS

The primrose in the sheade do blow,
The cowslip in the zun,
The thyme upon the down do grow,

THE THREE COTTAGE GIRLS

The cote where streams do run;
An' where do pretty maidens grow
An' blow, but where the tower
Do rise among the bricken tuns,
In Blackmware by the Stour.

If you could zee their comely gait,
An' pretty feaces' smiles,
A–trippen on so light o' waight,
An' steppen off the stiles;
A–gwain to church, as bells do swing
An' ring within the tower,
You'd own the pretty maidens' pleace
Is Blackmware by the Stour.

If you vrom Wimborne took your road,
To Stower or Paladore,
An' all the farmers' housen showed
Their daughters at the door;
You'd cry to bachelors at hwome –
"Here, come: 'ithin an hour
You'll vind ten maidens to your mind,
In Blackmware by the Stour."

An' if you looked 'ithin their door,
To zee em in their pleace,
A–doen housework up avore
Their smilen mother's feace;
You'd cry – "Why if a man would wive
An' thrive, 'ithout a dower,
Then let en look en out a wife
In Blackmware by the Stour."

As I upon my road did pass
A school–house back in May,
There out upon the beaten grass
Wer maidens at their play;
An' as the pretty souls did tweil
An' smile, I cried, "The flower
O' beauty, then, is still in bud
In Blackmware by the Stour."

William Barnes [1801–1886]

A PORTRAIT

"One name is Elizabeth" Ben Jonson

I will paint her as I see her.
Ten times have the lilies blown
Since she looked upon the sun.

And her face is lily-clear,
Lily-shaped, and dropped in duty
To the law of its own beauty.

Oval cheeks encolored faintly,
Which a trail of golden hair
Keeps from fading off to air:

And a forehead fair and saintly,
Which two blue eyes undershine,
Like meek prayers before a shrine.

Face and figure of a child, –
Though too calm, you think, and tender,
For the childhood you would lend her.

Yet child-simple, undefiled,
Frank, obedient, waiting still
On the turnings of your will.

Moving light, as all young things,
As young birds, or early wheat
When the wind blows over it.

Only, free from flutterings
Of loud mirth that scorneth measure –
Taking love for her chief pleasure.

Choosing pleasures, for the rest,
Which come softly – just as she,
When she nestles at your knee.

Quiet talk she liketh best,
In a bower of gentle looks, –
Watering flowers, or reading books.

And her voice, it murmurs lowly,
As a silver stream may run,
Which yet feels (you feel) the sun.

And her smile it seems half holy,

As if drawn from thoughts more far
Than our common jestings are.

And if any poet knew her,
He would sing of her with falls
Used in lovely madrigals.

And if any painter drew her,
He would paint her unaware
With a halo round her hair.

And if reader read the poem,
He would whisper – "You have done a
Consecrated little Una!"

And a dreamer (did you show him
That same picture) would exclaim,
"'Tis my angel, with a name!"

And a stranger, – when he sees her
In the street even – smileth stilly,
Just as you would at a lily.

And all voices that address her,
Soften, sleecken every word,
As if speaking to a bird.

And all fancies yearn to cover
The hard earth, whereon she passes,
With the thymy-scented grasses.

And all hearts do pray, "God love her!"
Ay and always, in good sooth,
We may all be sure HE DOTTH.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning [1806–1861]

TO A CHILD OF FANCY

The nests are in the hedgerows,
The lambs are on the grass;
With laughter sweet as music
The hours lightfooted pass,
My darling child of fancy,
My winsome prattling lass.

Blue eyes, with long brown lashes,
Thickets of golden curl,
Red little lips disclosing
Twin rows of fairy pearl,
Cheeks like the apple blossom,
Voice lightsome as the merle.

A whole Spring's fickle changes,
In every short-lived day,
A passing cloud of April,
A flowery smile of May,
A thousand quick mutations
From graver moods to gay.

Far off, I see the season
When thy childhood's course is run,
And thy girlhood opens wider
Beneath the growing sun,
And the rose begins to redden,
But the violets are done.

And further still the summer,
When thy fair tree, fully grown,
Shall bourgeon, and grow splendid
With blossoms of its own,
And the fruit begins to gather,
But the buttercups are mown.

If I should see thy autumn,
'Twill not be close at hand,
But with a spirit vision,
From some far-distant land.
Or, perhaps, I hence may see thee
Amongst the angels stand.

I know not what of fortune
The future holds for thee,
Nor if skies fair or clouded
Wait thee in days to be,

But neither joy nor sorrow
Shall sever thee from me.

Dear child, whatever changes
Across our lives may pass,
I shall see thee still for ever,
Clearly as in a glass,
The same sweet child of fancy,
The same dear winsome lass.

Lewis Morris [1833–1907]

DAISY

Where the thistle lifts a purple crown
Six foot out of the turf,
And the harebell shakes on the windy hill –
O the breath of the distant surf! –

The hills look over on the South,
And southward dreams the sea;
And with the sea-breeze hand in hand
Came innocence and she.

Where 'mid the gorse the raspberry
Red for the gatherer springs,
Two children did we stray and talk
Wise, idle, childish things.

She listened with big-lipped surprise,
Breast-deep 'mid flower and spine:
Her skin was like a grape, whose veins
Run snow instead of wine.

She knew not those sweet words she spake,
Nor knew her own sweet way;
But there's never a bird, so sweet a song
Thronged in whose throat that day!

Oh, there were flowers in Storrington
On the turf and on the spray;
But the sweetest flower on Sussex hills
Was the Daisy-flower that day!

Her beauty smoothed earth's furrowed face!
She gave me tokens three: –
A look, a word of her winsome mouth,
And a wild raspberry.

A berry red, a guileless look,
A still word, – strings of sand!
And yet they made my wild, wild heart
Fly down to her little hand.

For standing artless as the air,
And candid as the skies,
She took the berries with her hand,
And the love with her sweet eyes.

The fairest things have fleetest end:

Their scent survives their close,
But the rose's scent is bitterness
To him that loved the rose!

She looked a little wistfully,
Then went her sunshine way: –
The sea's eye had a mist on it,
And the leaves fell from the day.

She went her unremembering way,
She went and left in me
The pang of all the partings gone,
And partings yet to be.

She left me marveling why my soul
Was sad that she was glad;
At all the sadness in the sweet,
The sweetness in the sad.

Still, still I seemed to see her, still
Look up with soft replies,
And take the berries with her hand,
And the love with her lovely eyes.

Nothing begins, and nothing ends,
That is not paid with moan;
For we are born in others' pain,
And perish in our own.

Francis Thompson [1859?–1907]

TO PETRONILLA WHO HAS PUT UP HER HAIR

Yesterday it blew away,
Yesterday is dead,
Now forever must it stay
Coiled about your head,
Tell me Whence the great Command
Hitherward has sped.
"Silly boy, as if I knew,"
Petronilla said.

Nay, but I am very sure,
Since you left my side,
Something has befallen you,
You are fain to hide,
Homage has been done to you,
Innocents have died.
"Silly boy, and what of that?"
Petronilla cried.

Petronilla, much I fear
Scarcely have you wept
All those merry yesterdays,
Slaughtered whilst you slept,
Slain to bind that pretty crown
Closer round your head.
"Silly boy, as if I cared,"
Petronilla said.

Henry Howarth Bashford [1880–

THE GYPSY GIRL

Passing I saw her as she stood beside
A lonely stream between two barren wolds;
Her loose vest hung in rudely gathered folds
On her swart bosom, which in maiden pride
Pillowed a string of pearls; among her hair
Twined the light bluebell and the stone-crop gay;
And not far thence the small encampment lay,
Curling its wreathed smoke into the air.
She seemed a child of some sun-favored clime;
So still, so habited to warmth and rest;
And in my wayward musings on past time,
When my thought fills with treasured memories,
That image nearest borders on the blest
Creations of pure art that never dies.

Henry Alford [1810–1871]

FANNY

A Southern Blossom

Come and see her as she stands,
Crimson roses in her hands;
And her eyes
Are as dark as Southern night,
Yet than Southern dawn more bright,
And a soft, alluring light
In them lies.

None deny if she beseech
With that pretty, liquid speech
Of the South.
All her consonants are slurred,
And the vowels are preferred;
There's a poem in each word
From that mouth.

Even Cupid is her slave;
Of her arrows, half he gave
Her one day
In a merry, playful hour.
Dowered with these and beauty's dower,
Strong indeed her magic power,
So they say.

Venus, not to be outdone
By her generous little son,
Shaped the mouth
Very like to Cupid's bow.
Lack-a-day! Our North can show
No such lovely flowers as grow
In the South!

Anne Reeve Aldrich [1866–1892]

SOMEBODY'S CHILD

Just a picture of Somebody's child, –
Sweet face set in golden hair,
Violet eyes, and cheeks of rose,
Rounded chin, with a dimple there,

Tender eyes where the shadows sleep,
Lit from within by a secret ray, –
Tender eyes that will shine like stars
When love and womanhood come this way:

Scarlet lips with a story to tell, –
Blessed be he who shall find it out,
Who shall learn the eyes' deep secret well,
And read the heart with never a doubt.

Then you will tremble, scarlet lips,
Then you will crimson, loveliest cheeks:
Eyes will brighten and blushes will burn
When the one true lover bends and speaks.

But she's only a child now, as you see,
Only a child in her careless grace:
When Love and Womanhood come this way
Will anything sadden the flower-like face?

Louise Chandler Moulton [1835–1908]

EMILIA

Halfway up the Hemlock valley turnpike,
In the bend of Silver Water's arm,
Where the deer come trooping down at even,
Drink the cowslip pool, and fear no harm,
Dwells Emilia,
Flower of the fields of Camlet Farm.

Sitting sewing by the western window
As the too brief mountain sunshine flies,
Hast thou seen a slender-shouldered figure
With a chestnut braid, Minerva-wise,
Round her temples,
Shadowing her gray, enchanted eyes?

When the freshets flood the Silver Water,
When the swallow flying northward braves
Sleeting rains that sweep the birchen foothills
Where the windflowers' pale plantation waves –
(Fairy gardens
Springing from the dead leaves in their graves), –

Falls forgotten, then, Emilia's needle;
Ancient ballads, fleeting through her brain,
Sing the cuckoo and the English primrose,
Outdoors calling with a quaint refrain;
And a rainbow
Seems to brighten through the gusty rain.

Forth she goes, in some old dress and faded,
Fearless of the showery shifting wind;
Kilted are her skirts to clear the mosses,
And her bright braids in a 'kerchief pinned,
Younger sister
Of the damsel-errant Rosalind.

While she helps to serve the harvest supper
In the lantern-lighted village hall,
Moonlight rises on the burning woodland,
Echoes dwindle from the distant Fall.
Hark, Emilia!
In her ear the airy voices call.

Hidden papers in the dusty garret,
Where her few and secret poems lie, –
Thither flies her heart to join her treasure,
While she serves, with absent-musing eye,

Mighty tankards
Foaming cider in the glasses high.

"Would she mingle with her young companions!"
Vainly do her aunts and uncles say;
Ever, from the village sports and dances,
Early missed, Emilia slips away.
Whither vanished?
With what unimagined mates to play?

Did they seek her, wandering by the water,
They should find her comrades shy and strange:
Queens and princesses, and saints and fairies,
Dimly moving in a cloud of change: –
Desdemona;
Mariana of the Moated Grange.

Up this valley to the fair and market
When young farmers from the southward ride,
Oft they linger at a sound of chanting
In the meadows by the turnpike side;
Long they listen,
Deep in fancies of a fairy bride.

Sarah N. Cleghorn [1876–

TO A GREEK GIRL

With breath of thyme and bees that hum,
Across the years you seem to come, –
Across the years with nymph-like head,
And wind-blown brows unfilleted;
A girlish shape that slips the bud
In lines of unspoiled symmetry;
A girlish shape that stirs the blood
With pulse of Spring, Autonoe!

Where'er you pass, – where'er you go,
I hear the pebbly rillet flow;
Where'er you go, – where'er you pass,
There comes a gladness on the grass;
You bring blithe airs where'er you tread, –
Blithe airs that blow from down and sea;
You wake in me a Pan not dead, –
Not wholly dead! – Autonoe!

How sweet with you on some green sod
To wreathe the rustic garden-god;
How sweet beneath the chestnut's shade
With you to weave a basket-braid;
To watch across the stricken chords
Your rosy-twinkling fingers flee;
To woo you in soft woodland words,
With woodland pipe, Autonoe!

In vain, – in vain! The years divide:
Where Thamis rolls a murky tide,
I sit and fill my painful reams,
And see you only in my dreams; –
A vision, like Alcestis, brought
From under-lands of Memory, –
A dream of Form in days of Thought, –
A dream, – a dream, Autonoe!

Austin Dobson [1840–1921]

"CHAMBER SCENE"

An Exquisite Picture In The Studio Of A Young Artist At Rome

She rose from her untroubled sleep,
And put away her soft brown hair,
And, in a tone as low and deep
As love's first whisper, breathed a prayer –
Her snow–white hands together pressed,
Her blue eyes sheltered in the lid,
The folded linen on her breast,
Just swelling with the charms it hid;
And from her long and flowing dress
Escaped a bare and slender foot,
Whose shape upon the earth did press
Like a new snow–flake, white and "mute";
And there, from slumber pure and warm,
Like a young spirit fresh from heaven,
She bowed her slight and graceful form,
And humbly prayed to be forgiven.

Oh God! if souls unsoiled as these
Need daily mercy from Thy throne;
If she upon her bended knees,
Our loveliest and our purest one, –
She, with a face so clear and bright,
We deem her some stray child of light; –
If she, with those soft eyes in tears,
Day after day in her first years,
Must kneel and pray for grace from Thee,
What far, far deeper need have we!
How hardly, if she win not heaven,
Will our wild errors be forgiven!

Nathaniel Parker Willis [1806–1867]

"AH, BE NOT FALSE"

Ah, be not false, sweet Splendor!
Be true, be good;
Be wise as thou art tender;
Be all that Beauty should.

Not lightly be thy citadel subdued;
Not ignobly, not untimely,
Take praise in solemn mood;
Take love sublimely.

Richard Watson Gilder [1844–1909]

A LIFE-LESSON

There! little girl, don't cry!
They have broken your doll, I know;
And your tea-set blue,
And your play-house, too,
Are things of the long ago;
But childish troubles will soon pass by. –
There! little girl, don't cry!

There! little girl, don't cry!
They have broken your slate, I know;
And the glad, wild ways
Of your school-girl days
Are things of the long ago;
But life and love will soon come by. –
There! little girl, don't cry!

There! little girl, don't cry!
They have broken your heart, I know;
And the rainbow gleams
Of your youthful dreams
Are things of the long ago;
But Heaven holds all for which you sigh. –
There! little girl, don't cry!

James Whitcomb Riley [1849–1916]

THE MAN

THE BREAKING

The Lord God Speaks To A Youth

Bend now thy body to the common weight:
(But oh, that vine-clad head, those limbs of morn!
Those proud young shoulders, I myself made straight!
How shall ye wear the yoke that must be worn?)

Look thou, my son, what wisdom comes to thee:
(But oh, that singing mouth, those radiant eyes!
Those dancing feet – that I myself made free!
How shall I sadden them to make them wise?)

Nay, then, thou shalt! Resist not – have a care!
(Yea, I must work my plans who sovereign sit;
Yet do not tremble so! I cannot bear –
Though I am God – to see thee so submit!)

Margaret Steele Anderson [1869–1921]

THE FLIGHT OF YOUTH

There are gains for all our losses,
There are balms for all our pain:
But when youth, the dream, departs,
It takes something from our hearts,
And it never comes again.

We are stronger, and are better,
Under manhood's sterner reign:
Still we feel that something sweet
Followed youth, with flying feet,
And will never come again.

Something beautiful is vanished,
And we sigh for it in vain:
We behold it everywhere,
On the earth, and in the air,
But it never comes again.

Richard Henry Stoddard [1825–1903]

"DAYS OF MY YOUTH"

Days of my youth,
Ye have glided away;
Hairs of my youth,
Ye are frosted and gray;
Eyes of my youth,
Your keen sight is no more;
Cheeks of my youth,
Ye are furrowed all o'er;
Strength of my youth,
All your vigor is gone;
Thoughts of my youth,
Your gay visions are flown.

Days of my youth,
I wish not your recall;
Hairs of my youth,
I'm content ye should fall;
Eyes of my youth,
You much evil have seen;
Cheeks of my youth,
Bathed in tears have you been;
Thoughts of my youth,
You have led me astray;
Strength of my youth,
Why lament your decay?

Days of my age,
Ye will shortly be past;
Pains of my age,
Yet awhile ye can last;
Joys of my age,
In true wisdom delight;
Eyes of my age,
Be religion your light;
Thoughts of my age,
Dread ye not the cold sod;
Hopes of my age,
Be ye fixed on your God.

St. George Tucker [1752–1827]

AVE ATQUE VALE

Farewell my Youth! for now we needs must part,
For here the paths divide;
Here hand from hand must sever, heart from heart, –
Divergence deep and wide.

You'll wear no withered roses for my sake,
Though I go mourning for you all day long,
Finding no magic more in bower or brake,
No melody in song.

Gray Eld must travel in my company
To seal this severance more fast and sure.
A joyless fellowship, i' faith, 'twill be,
Yet must we fare together, I and he,
Till I shall tread the footpath way no more.

But when a blackbird pipes among the boughs,
On some dim, iridescent day in spring,
Then I may dream you are remembering
Our ancient vows.

Or when some joy foregone, some fate forsworn,
Looks through the dark eyes of the violet,
I may re-cross the set, forbidden bourne,
I may forget
Our long, long parting for a little while,
Dream of the golden splendors of your smile,
Dream you remember yet.

Rosamund Marriott Watson [1863–1911]

TO YOUTH

Where art thou gone, light-ankled Youth?
With wing at either shoulder,
And smile that never left thy mouth
Until the Hours grew colder:

Then somewhat seemed to whisper near
That thou and I must part;
I doubted it; I felt no fear,
No weight upon the heart.

If aught befell it, Love was by
And rolled it off again;
So, if there ever was a sigh,
'Twas not a sigh of pain.

I may not call thee back; but thou
Returnest when the hand
Of gentle Sleep waves o'er my brow
His poppy-crested wand;

Then smiling eyes bend over mine,
Then lips once pressed invite;
But sleep hath given a silent sign,
And both, alas! take flight.

Walter Savage Landor [1775-1864]

STANZAS WRITTEN ON THE ROAD BETWEEN FLORENCE AND PISA

Oh, talk not to me of a name great in story;
The days of our youth are the days of our glory;
And the myrtle and ivy of sweet two-and-twenty
Are worth all your laurels, though ever so plenty.

What are garlands and crowns to the brow that is wrinkled?
'Tis but as a dead-flower with May-dew besprinkled:
Then away with all such from the head that is hoary!
What care I for the wreaths that can only give glory?

Oh Fame! – if I e'er took delight in thy praises,
'Twas less for the sake of thy high-sounding phrases,
Than to see the bright eyes of the dear one discover,
She thought that I was not unworthy to love her.

There chiefly I sought thee, there only I found thee;
Her glance was the best of the rays that surround thee;
When it sparkled o'er aught that was bright in my story,
I knew it was love, and I felt it was glory.

George Gordon Byron [1788–1824]

STANZAS FOR MUSIC

There's not a joy the world can give like that it takes away,
When the glow of early thought declines in feeling's dull decay;
'Tis not on youth's smooth cheek the blush alone, which fades so fast,
But the tender bloom of heart is gone, ere youth itself be past.

Then the few whose spirits float above the wreck of happiness
Are driven o'er the shoals of guilt or ocean of excess:
The magnet of their course is gone, or only points in vain
The shore to which their shivered sail shall never stretch again.

Then the mortal coldness of the soul like death itself comes down;
It cannot feel for others' woes, it dare not dream its own;
That heavy chill has frozen o'er the fountain of our tears,
And though the eye may sparkle still, 'tis where the ice appears.

Though wit may flash from fluent lips, and mirth distract the breast,
Through midnight hours that yield no more their former hope of rest;
'Tis but as ivy-leaves around the ruined turret wreath,
All green and wildly fresh without, but worn and gray beneath.

Oh could I feel as I have felt, – or be what I have been,
Or weep as I could once have wept o'er many a vanished scene;
As springs in deserts found seem sweet, all brackish though they be,
So, midst the withered waste of life, those tears would flow to me.

George Gordon Byron [1788–1824]

"WHEN AS A LAD"

When, as a lad, at break of day
I watched the fishers sail away,
My thoughts, like flocking birds, would follow
Across the curving sky's blue hollow,
And on and on—
Into the very heart of dawn!

For long I searched the world! Ah me!
I searched the sky, I searched the sea,
With much of useless grief and rueing,
Those winged thoughts of mine pursuing —
So dear were they,
So lovely and so far away!

I seek them still and always will
Until my laggard heart is still,
And I am free to follow, follow,
Across the curving sky's blue hollow,
Those thoughts too fleet
For any save the soul's swift feet!

Isabel Ecclestone Mackay [1875—

"AROUND THE CHILD"

Around the child bend all the three
Sweet Graces – Faith, Hope, Charity.
Around the man bend other faces
Pride, Envy, Malice, are his Graces.

Walter Savage Landor [1775–1864]

ALADDIN

When I was a beggarly boy,
And lived in a cellar damp,
I had not a friend nor a toy,
But I had Aladdin's lamp;
When I could not sleep for the cold,
I had fire enough in my brain,
And builded, with roofs of gold,
My beautiful castles in Spain!

Since then I have toiled day and night,
I have money and power good store,
But I'd give all my lamps of silver bright
For the one that is mine no more.
Take, Fortune, whatever you choose;
You gave, and may snatch again;
I have nothing 'twould pain me to lose,
For I own no more castles in Spain!

James Russell Lowell [1819–1891]

THE QUEST

It was a heavenly time of life
When first I went to Spain,
The lovely land of silver mists,
The land of golden grain.

My little ship through unknown seas
Sailed many a changing day;
Sometimes the chilling winds came up
And blew across her way;

Sometimes the rain came down and hid
The shining shores of Spain,
The beauty of the silver mists
And of the golden grain.

But through the rains and through the winds,
Upon the untried sea,
My fairy ship sailed on and on,
With all my dreams and me.

And now, no more a child, I long
For that sweet time again,
When on the far horizon bar
Rose up the shores of Spain.

O lovely land of silver mists,
O land of golden grain,
I look for you with smiles, with tears,
But look for you in vain!

Ellen Mackay Hutchinson Cortissoz [?-1933]

MY BIRTH-DAY

"My birth-day" – what a different sound
That word had in my youthful ears!
And how, each time the day comes round,
Less and less white its mark appears!
When first our scanty years are told,
It seems like pastime to grow old;
And, as Youth counts the shining links
That Time around him binds so fast,
Pleased with the task, he little thinks
How hard that chain will press at last.
Vain was the man, and false as vain,
Who said – "were he ordained to run
His long career of life again,
He would do all that he had done."

Ah, 'tis not thus the voice, that dwells
In sober birth-days, speaks to me;
Far otherwise – of time it tells
Lavished unwisely, carelessly;
Of counsel mocked: of talents, made
Haply for high and pure designs,
But oft, like Israel's incense, laid
Upon unholy, earthly shrines;
Of nursing many a wrong desire;
Of wandering after Love too far,
And taking every meteor-fire
That crossed my pathway, for a star.
All this it tells, and, could I trace
The imperfect picture o'er again,
With power to add, retouch, efface
The lights and shades, the joy and pain,
How little of the past would stay!
How quickly all should melt away –
All – but that Freedom of the Mind,
Which hath been more than wealth to me;
Those friendships, in my boyhood twined,
And kept till now unchangingly;
And that dear home, that saving-ark,
Where Love's true light at last I've found,
Cheering within, when all grows dark,
And comfortless, and stormy round!

Thomas Moore [1779–1852]

SONNET

On His Having Arrived To The Age of Twenty–Three

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three–and–twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth
That I to manhood am arrived so near;
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely–happy spirits endu'th.
Yet, be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven:
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task–master's eye.

John Milton [1608–1674]

ON THIS DAY I COMPLETE MY THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR

'Tis time this heart should be unmoved,
Since others it hath ceased to move:
Yet, though I cannot be beloved,
Still let me love!

My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief

Are mine alone!

The fire that on my bosom preys
Is lone as some volcanic isle;
No torch is kindled at its blaze –
A funeral pile.

The hope, the fear, the jealous care,
The exalted portion of the pain
And power of love, I cannot share,
But wear the chain.

But 'tis not thus – and 'tis not here –
Such thoughts should shake my soul, nor now,
Where glory decks the hero's bier,
Or binds his brow.

The sword, the banner, and the field,
Glory and Greece, around me see!
The Spartan, borne upon his shield,
Was not more free.

Awake! (not Greece – she is awake!)
Awake, my spirit! Think through whom
Thy life–blood tracks its parent lake,
And then strike home!

Tread those reviving passions down,
Unworthy manhood I – unto thee
Indifferent should the smile or frown
Of beauty be.

If thou regret'st thy youth, why live?
The land of honorable death
Is here: – up to the field, and give
Away thy breath!

The Home Book of Verse, V1

Seek out – less often sought than found –
A soldier's grave, for thee the best;
Then look around, and choose thy ground,
And take thy rest.

George Gordon Byron [1788–1824]

GROWING GRAY
"On a l'age de son caeur."

A. D'Houdetot

A little more toward the light; –
Me miserable! Here's one that's white;
And one that's turning;
Adieu to song and "salad days;"
My Muse, let's go at once to Jay's,
And order mourning.

We must reform our rhymes, my Dear, –
Renounce the gay for the severe, –
Be grave, not witty;
We have, no more, the right to find
That Pyrrha's hair is neatly twined, –
That Chloe's pretty.

Young Love's for us a farce that's played;
Light canzonet and serenade
No more may tempt us;
Gray hairs but ill accord with dreams;
From aught but sour didactic themes
Our years exempt us.

Indeed! you really fancy so?
You think for one white streak we grow
At once satiric?
A fiddlestick! Each hair's a string
To which our ancient Muse shall sing
A younger lyric.

The heart's still sound. Shall "cakes and ale"
Grow rare to youth because we rail
At schoolboy dishes?
Perish the thought! 'Tis ours to chant
When neither Time nor Tide can grant
Belief with wishes.

Austin Dobson [1840–1921]

THE ONE WHITE HAIR

The wisest of the wise
Listen to pretty lies
And love to hear'em told.
Doubt not that Solomon
Listened to many a one, –
Some in his youth, and more when he grew old.

I never was among
The choir of Wisdom's song,
But pretty lies loved I
As much as any king,
When youth was on the wing,
And (must it then be told?) when youth had quite gone by.

Alas! and I have not
The pleasant hour forgot
When one pert lady said,
"O Walter! I am quite
Bewildered with affright!
I see (sit quiet now) a white hair on your head!"

Another more benign
Snipped it away from mine,
And in her own dark hair
Pretended it was found . . .
She leaped, and twirled it round . . .
Fair as she was, she never was so fair!

Walter Savage Landor [1775–1864]

BALLADE OF MIDDLE AGE

Our youth began with tears and sighs,
With seeking what we could not find;
Our verses all were threnodies,
In elegiacs still we whined;
Our ears were deaf, our eyes were blind,
We sought and knew not what we sought.
We marvel, now we look behind:
Life's more amusing than we thought!

Oh, foolish youth, untimely wise!
Oh, phantoms of the sickly mind!
What? not content with seas and skies,
With rainy clouds and southern wind,
With common cares and faces kind,
With pains and joys each morning brought?
Ah, old, and worn, and tired we find
Life's more amusing than we thought!

Though youth "turns spectre—thin and dies,"
To mourn for youth we're not inclined;
We set our souls on salmon flies,
We whistle where we once repined.
Confound the woes of human—kind!
By Heaven we're "well deceived," I wot;
Who hum, contented or resigned,
"Life's more amusing than we thought"!

ENVOY

O nate mecum, worn and lined
Our faces show, but that is naught;
Our hearts are young 'neath wrinkled rind:
Life's more amusing than we thought!

Andrew Lang [1844–1912]

MIDDLE AGE

When that my days were fewer,
Some twenty years ago,
And all that is was newer,
And time itself seemed slow,
With ardor all impassioned,
I let my hopes fly free,
And deemed the world was fashioned
My playing-field to be.

The cup of joy was filled then
With Fancy's sparkling wine;
And all the things I willed then
Seemed destined to be mine.
Friends had I then in plenty,
And every friend was true;
Friends always are at twenty,
And on to twenty-two.

The men whose hair was sprinkled
With little flecks of gray,
Whose faded brows were wrinkled –
Sure they had had their day.
And though we bore no malice,
We knew their hearts were cold,
For they had drained their chalice,
And now were spent and old.

At thirty, we admitted,
A man may be alive,
But slower, feebler witted;
And done at thirty-five.
If Fate prolongs his earth-days,
His joys grow fewer still;
And after five more birthdays
He totters down the hill.

We were the true immortals
Who held the earth in fee;
For us were flung the portals
Of fame and victory.
The days were bright and breezy,
And gay our banners flew,
And every peak was easy
To scale at twenty-two.

And thus we spent our gay time

As having much to spend;
Swift, swift, that pretty playtime
Flew by and had its end.
And lo! without a warning
I woke, as others do,
One fine mid-winter morning,
A man of forty-two.

And now I see how vainly
Is youth with ardor fired;
How fondly, how insanely
I formerly aspired.
A boy may still detest age,
But as for me I know,
A man has reached his best age
At forty-two or so.

For youth it is the season
Of restlessness and strife;
Of passion and unreason,
And ignorance of life.
Since, though his cheeks have roses,
No boy can understand
That everything he knows is
A graft at second hand.

But we have toiled and wandered
With weary feet and numb;
Have doubted, sifted, pondered, –
How else should knowledge come?
Have seen too late for heeding,
Our hopes go out in tears,
Lost in the dim receding,
Irrevocable years.

Yet, though with busy fingers
No more we wreath the flowers,
An airy perfume lingers,
A brightness still is ours.
And though no rose our cheeks have,
The sky still shines as blue;
And still the distant peaks have
The glow of twenty-two.

Rudolph Chambers Lehmann [1856–1929]

TO CRITICS

When I was seventeen I heard
From each censorious tongue,
"I'd not do that if I were you;
You see you're rather young."

Now that I number forty years,
I'm quite as often told
Of this or that I shouldn't do
Because I'm quite too old.

O carping world! If there's an age
Where youth and manhood keep
An equal poise, alas! I must
Have passed it in my sleep.

Walter Learned [1847–1915]

THE RAINBOW

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

William Wordsworth [1770–1850]

LEAVETAKING

Pass, thou wild light,
Wild light on peaks that so
Grieve to let go
The day.
Lovely thy tarrying, lovely too is night:
Pass thou away.

Pass, thou wild heart,
Wild heart of youth that still
Hast half a will
To stay.
I grow too old a comrade, let us part:
Pass thou away.

William Watson [1858–1935]

EQUINOCTIAL

The sun of life has crossed the line;
The summer–shine of lengthened light
Faded and failed, till, where I stand,
'Tis equal day and equal night.

One after one, as dwindling hours,
Youth's glowing hopes have dropped away,
And soon may barely leave the gleam
That coldly scores a winter's day.

I am not young; I am not old;
The flush of morn, the sunset calm,
Paling and deepening, each to each,
Meet midway with a solemn charm.

One side I see the summer fields,
Not yet disrobed of all their green;
While westerly, along the hills,
Flame the first tints of frosty sheen.

Ah, middle–point, where cloud and storm
Make battle–ground of this my life!
Where, even–matched, the night and day
Wage round me their September strife!

I bow me to the threatening gale:
I know when that is overpast,
Among the peaceful harvest days,
An Indian Summer comes at last!

Adeline D. T. Whitney [1824–1906]

"BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF YEARS"

From "Atalanta in Calydon"

Before the beginning of years,
There came to the making of man
Time, with a gift of tears;
Grief, with a glass that ran;
Pleasure, with pain for leaven;
Summer, with flowers that fell;
Remembrance, fallen from heaven;
And madness, risen from hell;
Strength, without hands to smite;
Love, that endures for a breath;
Night, the shadow of light;
And life, the shadow of death.

And the high gods took in hand
Fire, and the falling of tears,
And a measure of sliding sand
From under the feet of the years;
And froth and drift of the sea,
And dust of the laboring earth;
And bodies of things to be
In the houses of death and of birth;
And wrought with weeping and laughter,
And fashioned with loathing and love,
With life before and after,
And death beneath and above,
For a day and a night and a morrow,
That his strength might endure for a span,
With travail and heavy sorrow,
The holy Spirit of man.

From the winds of the north and the south
They gathered as unto strife;
They breathed upon his mouth,
They filled his body with life;
Eyesight and speech they wrought
For the veils of the soul therein,
A time for labor and thought,
A time to serve and to sin;
They gave him light in his ways,
And love, and a space for delight,
And beauty and length of days,
And night, and sleep in the night.
His speech is a burning fire;
With his lips he travaileth;
In his heart is a blind desire,

In his eyes foreknowledge of death;
He weaves, and is clothed with derision
Sows, and he shall not reap;
His life is a watch or a vision
Between a sleep and a sleep.

Algernon Charles Swinburne [1837–1909]

MAN

Weighing the steadfastness and state
Of some mean things which here below reside,
Where birds, like watchful clocks, the noiseless date
And intercourse of times divide.
Where bees at night get home and hive, and flowers,
Early as well as late,
Rise with the sun, and set in the same bowers;

I would, said I, my God would give
The staidness of these things to man! for these
To His divine appointments ever cleave,
And no new business breaks their peace;
The birds nor sow nor reap, yet sup and dine,
The flowers without clothes live,
Yet Solomon was never dressed so fine.

Man hath still either toys, or care;
He hath no root, nor to one place is tied,
But ever restless and irregular
About this earth doth run and ride;
He knows he hath a home, but scarce knows where;
He says it is so far,
That he hath quite forgot how to go there.

He knocks at all doors, strays and roams;
Nay, hath not so much wit as some stones have,
Which in the darkest nights point to their homes
By some hid sense their Maker gave;
Man is the shuttle, to whose winding quest
And passage through these looms
God ordered motion, but ordained no rest.

Henry Vaughan [1622–1695]

THE PULLEY

When God at first made Man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by –
Let us (said He) pour on him all we can;
Let the world's riches, which dispersed lie,
Contract into a span.

So strength first made a way,
Then beauty flowed, then wisdom, honor, pleasure:
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that, alone of all His treasure,
Rest in the bottom lay.

For if I should (said He)
Bestow this jewel also on My creature,
He would adore My gifts instead of Me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature:
So both should losers be.

Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness;
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to My breast.

George Herbert [1593–1633]

ODE ON THE INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

I

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore; –
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

II

The Rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the Rose;
The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.

III

Now, while the Birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young Lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief:
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong.
The Cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep:
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,
The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay;
Land and Sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every Beast keep holiday; –
Thou Child of Joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy Shepherd–boy!

IV

Ye blessed Creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;

My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fulness of your bliss, I feel – I feel it all.
O evil day! if I were sullen
While Earth herself is adorning
This sweet May morning,
And the Children are culling
On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm: –
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
– But there's a Tree, of many, one,
A single Field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
The Pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

V

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the East
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

VI

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And even with something of a Mother's mind,
And no unworthy aim,
The homely Nurse doth all she can,
To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

VII

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,
A six years' darling of a pigmy size!
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his Mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his Father's eyes!
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learned art;
A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral;
And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song:
Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife:
But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside,
And with new joy and pride
The little Actor cons another part;
Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"
With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage;
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation.

VIII

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy Soul's immensity;
Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind, –
Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave:
Thou, over whom thy Immortality
Broods like the Day, a master o'er a Slave,
A Presence which is not to be put by;
Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,
And Custom lie upon thee with a weight
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

IX

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,

That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest –
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new–fledged hope still fluttering in his breast: –
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realized,
High instincts before which our mortal Nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised:
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain–light of all our day,
Are yet a master–light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavor,
Nor Man nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence, in a season of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

X

Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young Lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to–day
Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find

Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

XI

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the Brooks, which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they:
The innocent brightness of a new-born Day
Is lovely yet;
The Clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober coloring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

William Wordsworth [1770–1850]

THE WOMAN

WOMAN

Not she with traitorous kiss her Saviour stung,
Not she denied him with unholy tongue;
She, while apostles shrank, could dangers brave,
Last at the cross and earliest at the grave.

Eaton Stannard Barrett [1786–1820]

WOMAN

There in the fane a beauteous creature stands,
The first best work of the Creator's hands,
Whose slender limbs inadequately bear
A full-orbed bosom and a weight of care;
Whose teeth like pearls, whose lips like cherries, show,
And fawn-like eyes still tremble as they glow.

From the Sanskrit of Calidasa

SIMPLEX MUNDITIIS

From "Epicoene"

Still to be neat, still to be dressed
As you were going to a feast;
Still to be powdered, still perfumed:
Lady, it is to be presumed,
Though art's hid causes are not found,
All is not sweet, all is not sound.

Give me a look, give me a face,
That makes simplicity a grace;
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free:
Such sweet neglect more taketh me
Than all the adulteries of art;
They strike mine eyes, but not my heart.

Ben Jonson [1573?–1637]

DELIGHT IN DISORDER

A sweet disorder in the dress
Kindles in clothes a wantonness:
A lawn about the shoulders thrown
Into a fine distraction:
An erring lace, which here and there
Enthrals the crimson stomacher:
A cuff neglectful, and thereby
Ribbons to flow confusedly:
A winning wave, deserving note,
In the tempestuous petticoat:
A careless shoe-string, in whose tie
I see a wild civility:
Do more bewitch me than when art
Is too precise in every part.

Robert Herrick [1591–1674]

A PRAISE OF HIS LADY

Give place, you ladies, and begone!
Boast not yourselves at all!
For here at hand approacheth one
Whose face will stain you all.

The virtue of her lively looks
Excels the precious stone;
I wish to have none other books
To read or look upon.

In each of her two crystal eyes
Smileth a naked boy;
It would you all in heart suffice
To see that lamp of joy.

I think Nature hath lost the mould
Where she her shape did take;
Or else I doubt if Nature could
So fair a creature make.

She may be well compared
Unto the Phoenix kind,
Whose like was never seen nor heard,
That any man can find.

In life she is Diana chaste,
In truth Penelope;
In word and eke in deed steadfast.
What will you more we say?

If all the world were sought so far,
Who could find such a wight?
Her beauty twinkleth like a star
Within the frosty night.

Her roseal color comes and goes
With such a comely grace,
More ruddier, too, than doth the rose
Within her lively face.

At Bacchus' feast none shall her meet,
Nor at no wanton play,
Nor gazing in an open street,
Nor gadding as a stray.

The modest mirth that she doth use

Is mixed with shamefastness;
All vice she doth wholly refuse,
And hateth idleness.

O Lord! it is a world to see
How virtue can repair,
And deck her in such honesty,
Whom Nature made so fair.

Truly she doth so far exceed
Our women nowadays,
As doth the gillyflower a weed;
And more a thousand ways.

How might I do to get a graff
Of this unspotted tree?
For all the rest are plain but chaff,
Which seem good corn to be.

This gift alone I shall her give:
When death doth what he can,
Her honest fame shall ever live
Within the mouth of man.

John Heywood [1497?–1580?]

ON A CERTAIN LADY AT COURT

I know a thing that's most uncommon;
(Envy, be silent and attend!)
I know a reasonable woman,
Handsome and witty, yet a friend.

Not warped by passion, awed by rumor;
Not grave through pride, nor gay through folly;
An equal mixture of good-humor
And sensible soft melancholy.

"Has she no faults then, (Envy says), Sir?"
Yes, she has one, I must aver:
When all the world conspires to praise her,
The woman's deaf, and does not hear.

Alexander Pope [1688–1744]

PERFECT WOMAN

She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight;
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament;
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair;
Like twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful dawn;
A dancing shape, an image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and waylay.

I saw her upon nearer view,
A Spirit, yet a Woman too!
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin liberty;
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet;
A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine;
A being breathing thoughtful breath,
A traveller between life and death;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
A perfect Woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a Spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light.

William Wordsworth [1770–1850]

THE SOLITARY-HEARTED

She was a queen of noble Nature's crowning,
A smile of hers was like an act of grace;
She had no winsome looks, no pretty frowning,
Like daily beauties of the vulgar race:
But if she smiled, a light was on her face,
A clear, cool kindliness, a lunar beam
Of peaceful radiance, silvering o'er the stream
Of human thought with unabiding glory;
Not quite a waking truth, not quite a dream,
A visitation, bright and transitory.

But she is changed, – hath felt the touch of sorrow,
No love hath she, no understanding friend;
O grief! when Heaven is forced of earth to borrow
What the poor niggard earth has not to lend;
But when the stalk is snapped, the rose must bend.
The tallest flower that skyward rears its head
Grows from the common ground, and there must shed
Its delicate petals. Cruel fate, too surely,
That they should find so base a bridal bed,
Who lived in virgin pride, so sweet and purely.

She had a brother, and a tender father,
And she was loved, but not as others are
From whom we ask return of love, – but rather
As one might love a dream; a phantom fair
Of something exquisitely strange and rare,
Which all were glad to look on, men and maids,
Yet no one claimed – as oft, in dewy glades,
The peering primrose, like a sudden gladness,
Gleams on the soul, yet unregarded fades; –
The joy is ours, but all its own the sadness.

'Tis vain to say – her worst of grief is only
The common lot, which all the world have known;
To her 'tis more, because her heart is lonely,
And yet she hath no strength to stand alone, –
Once she had playmates, fancies of her own,
And she did love them. They are passed away
As Fairies vanish at the break of day;
And like a spectre of an age departed,
Or unsphered Angel wofully astray,
She glides along – the solitary-hearted.

Hartley Coleridge [1796–1849]

OF THOSE WHO WALK ALONE

Women there are on earth, most sweet and high,
Who lose their own, and walk bereft and lonely,
Loving that one lost heart until they die,
Loving it only.

And so they never see beside them grow
Children, whose coming is like breath of flowers;
Consoled by subtler loves the angels know
Through childless hours.

Good deeds they do: they comfort and they bless
In duties others put off till the morrow;
Their look is balm, their touch is tenderness
To all in sorrow.

Betimes the world smiles at them, as 'twere shame,
This maiden guise, long after youth's departed;
But in God's Book they bear another name –
"The faithful-hearted."

Faithful in life, and faithful unto death,
Such souls, in sooth, illumine with lustre splendid
That glimpsed, glad land wherein, the Vision saith,
Earth's wrongs are ended.

Richard Burton [1861–

"SHE WALKS IN BEAUTY"

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

George Gordon Byron [1788–1824]

PRELUDES

From "The Angel in the House"

I UNTHRIFT

Ah, wasteful woman, she that may
On her sweet self set her own price,
Knowing man cannot choose but pay,
How has she cheapened paradise;
How given for nought her priceless gift,
How spoiled the bread, and spilled the wine,
Which, spent with due, respective thrift,
Had made brutes men, and men divine.

II HONOR AND DESERT

O Queen, awake to thy renown,
Require what 'tis our wealth to give,
And comprehend and wear the crown
Of thy despised prerogative!
I, who in manhood's name at length
With glad songs come to abdicate
The gross regality of strength,
Must yet in this thy praise abate,
That, through thine erring humbleness
And disregard of thy degree,
Mainly, has man been so much less
Than fits his fellowship with thee.

High thoughts had shaped the foolish brow,
The coward had grasped the hero's sword,
The vilest had been great, hadst thou,
Just to thyself, been worth's reward.
But lofty honors undersold
Seller and buyer both disgrace;
And favors that make folly bold
Banish the light from virtue's face.

III THE ROSE OF THE WORLD

Lo, when the Lord made North and South,
And sun and moon ordained, He,
Forthbringing each by word of mouth
In order of its dignity
Did man from the crude clay express

By sequence, and all else decreed,
He formed the woman; nor might less
Than Sabbath such a work succeed.

And still with favor singled out,
Marred less than man by mortal fall,
Her disposition is devout,
Her countenance angelical:
The best things that the best believe
Are in her face so kindly writ
The faithless, seeing her, conceive
Not only heaven, but hope of it;
No idle thought her instinct shrouds,
But fancy chequers settled sense,
Like alteration of the clouds
On noonday's azure permanence.

Pure dignity, composure, ease,
Declare affections nobly fixed,
And impulse sprung from due degrees
Of sense and spirit sweetly mixed.
Her modesty, her chiefest grace,
The cestus clasping Venus' side,
How potent to deject the face
Of him who would affront its pride!

Wrong dares not in her presence speak,
Nor spotted thought its taint disclose
Under the protest of a cheek
Outbragging Nature's boast, the rose.
In mind and manners how discreet;
How artless in her very art;
How candid in discourse; how sweet
The concord of her lips and heart!

How simple and how circumspect;
How subtle and how fancy-free;
Though sacred to her love, how decked
With unexclusive courtesy;
How quick in talk to see from far
The way to vanquish or evade;
How able her persuasions are
To prove, her reasons to persuade.

How (not to call true instinct's bent
And woman's very nature, harm),
How amiable and innocent

Her pleasure in her power to charm;
How humbly careful to attract,
Though crowned with all the soul desires,

Connubial aptitude exact,
Diversity that never tires!

IV
THE TRIBUTE

Boon Nature to the woman bows;
She walks in earth's whole glory clad,

And, chiefest far herself of shows,
All others help her and are glad:
No splendor 'neath the sky's proud dome
But serves her for familiar wear;
The far-fetched diamond finds its home
Flashing and smouldering in her hair;
For her the seas their pearls reveal;
Art and strange lands her pomp supply
With purple, chrome, and cochineal,
Ochre, and lapis lazuli;
The worm its golden woof presents;
Whatever runs, flies, dives, or delves,
All doff for her their ornaments,
Which suit her better than themselves;
And all, by this their power to give,
Proving her right to take, proclaim
Her beauty's clear prerogative
To profit so by Eden's blame.

V
NEAREST THE DEAREST

Till Eve was brought to Adam, he
A solitary desert trod,
Though in the great society
Of nature, angels, and of God.
If one slight column counterweighs
The ocean, 'tis the Maker's law,
Who deems obedience better praise
Than sacrifice of erring awe.

VI
THE FOREIGN LAND

A woman is a foreign land,
Of which, though there he settle young,
A man will ne'er quite understand
The customs, politics, and tongue.
The foolish hie them post-haste through,
See fashions odd and prospects fair,
Learn of the language, "How d'ye do,"
And go and brag they have been there.

PRELUDES

The most for leave to trade apply,
For once, at Empire's seat, her heart,
Then get what knowledge ear and eye
Glean chancewise in the life-long mart.
And certain others, few and fit,
Attach them to the Court, and see
The Country's best, its accent hit,
And partly sound its polity.

Coventry Patmore [1823–1896]

A HEALTH

I fill this cup to one made up
Of loveliness alone,
A woman, of her gentle sex
The seeming paragon;
To whom the better elements
And kindly stars have given
A form so fair, that, like the air,
'Tis less of earth than heaven.

Her every tone is music's own,
Like those of morning birds,
And something more than melody
Dwells ever in her words;
The coinage of her heart are they,
And from her lips each flows
As one may see the burdened bee
Forth issue from the rose.

Affections are as thoughts to her,
The measures of her hours;
Her feelings have the fragrancy,
The freshness of young flowers;
And lovely passions, changing oft,
So fill her, she appears
The image of themselves by turns, –
The idol of past years!

Of her bright face one glance will trace
A picture on the brain,
And of her voice in echoing hearts
A sound must long remain;
But memory, such as mine of her,
So very much endears,
When death is nigh my latest sigh
Will not be life's, but hers.

I fill this cup to one made up
Of loveliness alone,
A woman, of her gentle sex
The seeming paragon –
Her health! and would on earth there stood
Some more of such a frame,
That life might be all poetry,
And weariness a name.

Edward Coote Pinkney [1802–1828]

OUR SISTER

Her face was very fair to see,
So luminous with purity: –
It had no roses, but the hue
Of lilies lustrous with their dew –
Her very soul seemed shining through!

Her quiet nature seemed to be
Tuned to each season's harmony.
The holy sky bent near to her;
She saw a spirit in the stir
Of solemn woods. The rills that beat
Their mosses with voluptuous feet,
Went dripping music through her thought.
Sweet impulse came to her unsought
From graceful things, and beauty took
A sacred meaning in her look.

In the great Master's steps went she
With patience and humility.
The casual gazer could not guess
Half of her veiled loveliness;
Yet ah! what precious things lay hid
Beneath her bosom's snowy lid: –
What tenderness and sympathy,
What beauty of sincerity,
What fancies chaste, and loves, that grew
In heaven's own stainless light and dew!

True woman was she day by day
In suffering, toil, and victory.
Her life, made holy and serene
By faith, was hid with things unseen.
She knew what they alone can know
Who live above but dwell below.

Horatio Nelson Powers [1826–1890]

FROM LIFE

Her thoughts are like a flock of butterflies.
She has a merry love of little things,
And a bright flutter of speech, whereto she brings
A threefold eloquence – voice, hands and eyes.
Yet under all a subtle silence lies
As a bird's heart is hidden by its wings;
And you shall search through many wanderings
The fairyland of her realities.

She hides herself behind a busy brain –
A woman, with a child's laugh in her blood;
A maid, wearing the shadow of motherhood –
Wise with the quiet memory of old pain,
As the soft glamor of remembered rain
Hallows the gladness of a sunlit wood.

Brian Hooker [1880–

THE ROSE OF THE WORLD

Who dreamed that beauty passes like a dream?
For these red lips, with all their mournful pride,
Mournful that no new wonder may betide,
Troy passed away in one high funeral gleam,
And Usna's children died.

We and the laboring world are passing by:
Amid men's souls, that waver and give place,
Like the pale waters in their wintry race,
Under the passing stars, foam of the sky,
Lives on this lonely face.

Bow down, archangels, in your dim abode:
Before you were, or any hearts to beat,
Weary and kind one lingered by His seat;
He made the world to be a grassy road
Before her wandering feet.

William Butler Yeats [1865–

DAWN OF WOMANHOOD

Thus will I have the woman of my dream.
Strong must she be and gentle, like a star
Her soul burn whitely; nor its arrowy beam

May any cloud of superstition mar:
True to the earth she is, patient and calm.
Her tranquil eyes shall penetrate afar

Through centuries, and her maternal arm
Enfold the generations yet unborn;
Nor she, by passing glamor nor alarm,

Will from the steadfast way of life be drawn.
Gray-eyed and fearless, I behold her gaze
Outward into the furnace of the dawn.

Sacred shall be the purport of her days,
Yet human; and the passion of the earth
Shall be for her adornment and her praise.

She is most often joyous, with a mirth
That rings true-tempered holy womanhood,
She cannot fear the agonies of birth,

Nor sit in pallid lethargy and brood
Upon the coming seasons of her pain:
By her the mystery is understood

Of harvest, and fulfilment in the grain.
Yea, she is wont to labor in the field,
Delights to heap, at sunset, on the wain

Festoons and coronals of the golden yield.
A triumph is the labor of her soul,
Sublime along eternity revealed.

Lo, everlastingly in her control,
Under the even measure of her breath,
Like crested waves the onward centuries roll.

Nor to far heaven her spirit wandereth,
Nor lifteth she her voice in barren prayer,
Nor trembleth at appearances of death.

She, godlike in her womanhood, will fare
Calm-visaged and heroic to the end.

The homestead is her most especial care;

She loves the sacred hearth: she will defend
Her gods from desecration of the vile.
Fierce, like a wounded tigress, she can rend

Whatever may have entered to defile.
I see her in the evening by the fire,
And in her eyes, illumined from the pile

Of blazing logs, a motherly desire
Glow like the moulded passion of a rose;
Beautiful is her presence in the bower:

Her spirit is the spirit of repose.
Mankind shall hold her motherhood in awe:
Woman is she indeed, and not of those

That he with sacramental gold must draw
Discreetly to his chamber in the night,
Or bind to him with fetters of the law.

He holds her by a spiritual right.
With diamond and with pearl he need not sue;
Nor will she deck herself for his delight:

Beauty is the adornment of the true.
She shall possess for ornament and gem
A flower, the glowworm, or the drop of dew:

More innocently fair than all of them,
It will not even shame her if she make
A coronal of stars her diadem.

Though she is but a vision, I can take
Courage from her. I feel her arrowy beam
Already, for her spirit is awake,

And passes down the future like a gleam, –
Thus have I made the woman of my dream.

Harold Monro [1879–1932]

THE SHEPHERDESS

She walks – the lady of my delight –
A shepherdess of sheep.
Her flocks are thoughts. She keeps them white;
She guards them from the steep.
She feeds them on the fragrant height,
And folds them in for sleep.

She roams maternal hills and bright,
Dark valleys safe and deep.
Into that tender breast at night
The chastest stars may peep.
She walks – the lady of my delight –
A shepherdess of sheep.

She holds her little thoughts in sight,
Though gay they run and leap.
She is so circumspect and right;
She has her soul to keep.
She walks – the lady of my delight –
A shepherdess of sheep.

Alice Meynell [1853–1922]

A PORTRAIT

Mother and maid and soldier, bearing best
Her girl's lithe body under matron gray,
And opening new eyes on each new day
With faith concealed and courage unconfessed;
Jealous to cloak a blessing in a jest,
Clothe beauty carefully in disarray,
And love absurdly, that no word betray
The worship all her deeds make manifest:

Armored in smiles, a motley Britomart –
Her lance is high adventure, tipped with scorn;
Her banner to the suns and winds unfurled,
Washed white with laughter; and beneath her heart,
Shrined in a garland of laborious thorn,
Blooms the unchanging Rose of all the World.

Brian Hooker [1880–

THE WIFE

The little Dreams of Maidenhood –
I put them all away
As tenderly as mother would
The toys of yesterday,
When little children grow to men
Too over-wise for play.

The little dreams I put aside –
I loved them every one,
And yet since moon-blown buds must hide
Before the noon-day sun,
I close them wistfully away
And give the key to none.

O little Dreams of Maidenhood –
Lie quietly, nor care
If some day in an idle mood
I, searching unaware
Through some closed corner of my heart,
Should laugh to find you there.

Theodosia Garrison [1874–

"TRUSTY, DUSKY, VIVID, TRUE"

Trusty, dusky, vivid, true,
With eyes of gold and bramble-dew,
Steel true and blade straight
The great Artificer made my mate.

Honor, anger, valor, fire,
A love that life could never tire,
Death quench, or evil stir,
The mighty Master gave to her.

Teacher, tender comrade, wife,
A fellow-farer true through life,
Heart-whole and soul-free,
The August Father gave to me.

Robert Louis Stevenson [1850-1894]

THE SHRINE

There is a shrine whose golden gate
Was opened by the Hand of God;
It stands serene, inviolate,
Though millions have its pavement trod;
As fresh, as when the first sunrise
Awoke the lark in Paradise.

'Tis compassed with the dust and toil
Of common days, yet should there fall
A single speck, a single soil
Upon the whiteness of its wall,
The angels' tears in tender rain
Would make the temple theirs again.

Without, the world is tired and old,
But, once within the enchanted door,
The mists of time are backward rolled,
And creeds and ages are no more;
But all the human-hearted meet
In one communion vast and sweet.

I enter – all is simply fair,
Nor incense–clouds, nor carven throne;
But in the fragrant morning air
A gentle lady sits alone;
My mother – ah! whom should I see
Within, save ever only thee?

Digby Mackworth Dolben [1848–1867]

THE VOICE

As I went down the hill I heard
The laughter of the countryside;
For, rain being past, the whole land stirred
With new emotion, like a bride.
I scarce had left the grassy lane,
When something made me catch my breath:
A woman called, and called again,
Elizabeth! Elizabeth!

It was my mother's name. A part
Of wounded memory sprang to tears,
And the few violets of my heart
Shook in the wind of happier years.
Quicker than magic came the face
That once was sun and moon for me;
The garden shawl, the cap of lace,
The collie's head against her knee.

Mother, who findest out a way
To pass the sentinels, and stand
Behind my chair at close of day,
To touch me – almost – with thy hand,
Deep in my breast, how sure, how clear,
The lamp of love burns on till death! –
How trembles if I chance to hear
Elizabeth! Elizabeth!

Norman Gale [1862–

MOTHER

I have praised many loved ones in my song,
And yet I stand
Before her shrine, to whom all things belong,
With empty hand.

Perhaps the ripening future holds a time
For things unsaid;
Not now; men do not celebrate in rhyme
Their daily bread.

Theresa Helburn [1888–

AD MATREM

Oft in the after days, when thou and I
Have fallen from the scope of human view,
When, both together, under the sweet sky,
We sleep beneath the daisies and the dew,
Men will recall thy gracious presence bland,
Conning the pictured sweetness of thy face;
Will pore o'er paintings by thy plastic hand,
And vaunt thy skill and tell thy deeds of grace.
Oh, may they then, who crown thee with true bays,
Saying, "What love unto her son she bore!"
Make this addition to thy perfect praise,
"Nor ever yet was mother worshipped more!"
So shall I live with Thee, and thy dear fame
Shall link my love unto thine honored name.

Julian Fane [1827–1870]

C. L. M.

In the dark womb where I began,
My mother's life made me a man.
Through all the months of human birth
Her beauty fed my common earth.
I cannot see, nor breathe, nor stir,
But through the death of some of her.

Down in the darkness of the grave
She cannot see the life she gave.
For all her love, she cannot tell
Whether I use it ill or well,
Nor knock at dusty doors to find
Her beauty dusty in the mind.

If the grave's gates could be undone,
She would not know her little son,
I am so grown. If we should meet,
She would pass by me in the street,
Unless my soul's face let her see
My sense of what she did for me.

What have I done to keep in mind
My debt to her and womankind?
What woman's happier life repays
Her for those months of wretched days?
For all my mouthless body leeches
Ere Birth's releasing hell was reached?

What have I done, or tried, or said
In thanks to that dear woman dead?
Men triumph over women still,
Men trample women's rights at will,
And man's lust roves the world untamed. . .
O grave, keep shut lest I be shamed.

John Masefield [1878–

The Home Book of Verse, V1

STEPPING WESTWARD

STEPPING WESTWARD

"What, you are stepping westward?" – "Yea."
– 'Twould be a wildish destiny,
If we, who thus together roam

In a strange Land, and far from home,
Were in this place the guests of Chance:
Yet who would stop, or fear to advance
Though home or shelter he had none,
With such a sky to lead him on?

The dewy ground was dark and cold;
Behind, all gloomy to behold;
And stepping westward seemed to be
A kind of heavenly destiny:
I liked the greeting; 'twas a sound
Of something without place or bound;
And seemed to give me spiritual right
To travel through that region bright.

The voice was soft, and she who spake
Was walking by her native lake:
The salutation had to me
The very sound of courtesy:
Its power was felt; and while my eye
Was fixed upon the glowing Sky,
The echo of the voice enwrought
A human sweetness with the thought
Of travelling through the world that lay
Before me in my endless way.

William Wordsworth [1770–1850]

A FAREWELL TO ARMS

(To Queen Elizabeth)

His golden locks Time hath to silver turned;
O Time too swift, O swiftness never ceasing!
His youth 'gainst time and age hath ever spurned,
But spurned in vain; youth waneth by increasing:
Beauty, strength, youth, are flowers but fading seen;
Duty, faith, love, are roots, and ever green.

His helmet now shall make a hive for bees;
And lovers' sonnets turned to holy psalms,
A man-at-arms must now serve on his knees,
And feed on prayers, which are Age his alms:
But though from court to cottage he depart,
His Saint is sure of his unspotted heart.

And when he saddest sits in homely cell,
He'll teach his swains this carol for a song, –
"Blest be the hearts that wish my sovereign well,
Curst be the souls that think her any wrong."
Goddess, allow this aged man his right
To be your beadsman now that was your knight.

George Peele [1558?–1597?]

THE WORLD

The World's a bubble, and the life of Man
Less than a span:
In his conception wretched, – from the womb,
So to the tomb;
Curst from his cradle, and brought up to years
With cares and fears.
Who then to frail mortality shall trust,
But limns on water, or but writes in dust.

Yet whilst with sorrow here we live oppressed,
What life is best?
Courts are but only superficial schools
To dandle fools:
The rural parts are turned into a den
Of savage men;
And where's a city from foul vice so free,
But may be termed the worst of all the three?

Domestic cares afflict the husband's bed,
Or pains his head:
Those that live single, take it for a curse,
Or do things worse:
Some would have children; those that have them moan
Or wish them gone:
What is it, then, to have, or have no wife,
But single thralldom, or a double strife?

Our own affections still at home to please
Is a disease;
To cross the seas to any foreign soil,
Peril and toil;
Wars with their noise affright us; when they cease,
We are worse in peace:
– What then remains, but that we still should cry
For being born, or, being born, to die?

Francis Bacon [1561–1626]

"WHEN THAT I WAS AND A LITTLE TINY BOY"

From "Twelfth Night"

When that I was and a little tiny boy,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
A foolish thing was but a toy,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came to man's estate,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
'Gainst knaves and thieves men shut their gate,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came, alas! to wive,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
By swaggering could I never thrive,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came unto my beds,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
With toss-pots still had drunken heads;
For the rain it raineth every day.

A great while ago the world begun,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
But that's all one, our play is done,
And we'll strive to please you every day.

William Shakespeare [1564–1616]

OF THE LAST VERSES IN THE BOOK

When we for age could neither read nor write,
The subject made us able to indite;
The soul, with nobler resolutions decked,
The body stooping does herself erect.
No mortal parts are requisite to raise
Her that, unbodied, can her Maker praise.

The seas are quiet when the winds give o'er;
So calm are we when passions are no more.
For then we know how vain it was to boast
Of fleeting things, so certain to be lost.
Clouds of affection from our younger eyes
Conceal that emptiness which age descries.

The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
Lets in new light through chinks that Time has made:
Stronger by weakness, wiser, men become
As they draw near to their eternal home.
Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view
That stand upon the threshold of the new.

Edmund Waller [1606–1687]

A LAMENT

The Night Before His Execution

My prime of youth is but a frost of cares;
My feast of joy is but a dish of pain;
My crop of corn is but a field of tares;
And all my good is but vain hope of gain;
The day is fled, and yet I saw no sun;
And now I live, and now my life is done!

The spring is past, and yet it is not sprung;
The fruit is dead, and yet the leaves be green;
My youth is gone, and yet I am but young;
I saw the world, and yet I was not seen;
My thread is cut, and yet it is not spun;
And now I live, and now my life is done!

I sought my death, and found it in my womb;
I looked for life, and saw it was a shade;
I trod the earth, and knew it was my tomb;
And now I die, and now I am but made;
The glass is full, and now my glass is run;
And now I live, and now my life is done!

Chidioc Tichborne [1558?–1586]

TOMORROW

In the down-hill of life, when I find I'm declining,
May my fate no less fortunate be
Than a snug elbow-chair will afford for reclining,
And a cot that o'erlooks the wide sea;
With an ambling pad-pony to pace o'er the lawn,
While I carol away idle sorrow,
And blithe as the lark that each day hails the dawn,
Look forward with hope for Tomorrow.

With a porch at my door, both for shelter and shade too,
As the sunshine or rain may prevail,
And a small spot of ground for the use of the spade too,
With a barn for the use of the flail:
A cow for my dairy, a dog for my game,
And a purse when a friend wants to borrow;
I'll envy no Nabob his riches or fame,
Nor what honors may wait him Tomorrow.

From the bleak northern blast may my cot be completely
Secured by a neighboring hill;
And at night may repose steal upon me more sweetly
By the sound of a murmuring rill.
And while peace and plenty I find at my board,
With a heart free from sickness and sorrow,
With my friends may I share what Today may afford,
And let them spread the table Tomorrow.

And when I at last must throw off this frail covering,
Which I've worn for three-score years and ten,
On the brink of the grave I'll not seek to keep hovering,
Nor my thread wish to spin o'er again;
But my face in the glass I'll serenely survey,
And with smiles count each wrinkle and furrow;
And this old worn-out stuff, which is threadbare Today,
May become everlasting Tomorrow.

John Collins [1742?-1808]

LATE WISDOM

We've trod the maze of error round,
Long wandering in the winding glade;
And now the torch of truth is found,
It only shows us where we strayed:
By long experience taught, we know –
Can rightly judge of friends and foes;
Can all the worth of these allow,
And all the faults discern in those.

Now, 'tis our boast that we can quell
The wildest passions in their rage,
Can their destructive force repel,
And their impetuous wrath assuage. –
Ah, Virtue! dost thou arm when now
This bold rebellious race are fled?
When all these tyrants rest, and thou
Art warring with the mighty dead?

George Crabbe [1754–1832]

YOUTH AND AGE

Verse, a breeze 'mid blossoms straying,
Where Hope clung feeding like a bee, –
Both were mine! Life went a–maying
With Nature, Hope, and Poesy
When I was young!

When I was young? – Ah, woful When!
Ah, for the change 'twixt Now and Then!
This breathing house not built with hands,
This body that does me grievous wrong,
O'er aery cliffs and glittering sands,
How lightly then it flashed along: –
Like those trim skiffs, unknown of yore,
On winding lakes and rivers wide,
That ask no aid of sail or oar,
That fear no spite of wind or tide!
Naught cared this body for wind or weather
When Youth and I lived in't together.

Flowers are lovely; Love is flower–like;
Friendship is a sheltering tree;
Oh! the joys that came down shower–like,
Of Friendship, Love, and Liberty
Ere I was old!

Ere I was old? Ah, woful Ere,
Which tells me, Youth's no longer here!
O Youth! for years so many and sweet,
'Tis known that Thou and I were one.
I'll think it but a fond conceit –
It cannot be that Thou art gone!
Thy vesper–bell hath not yet tolled: –
And thou wert aye a masker bold!
What strange disguise hast now put on
To make believe that thou art gone?
I see these locks in silvery slips,
This drooping gait, this altered size:
But Springtide blossoms on thy lips,
And tears take sunshine from thine eyes!
Life is but thought: so think I will
That Youth and I are house–mates still.

Dewdrops are the gems of morning,
But the tears of mournful eve!
Where no hope is, life's a warning
That only serves to make us grieve

When we are old:

That only serves to make us grieve
With oft and tedious taking-leave,
Like some poor nigh-related guest,
That may not rudely be dismissed,
Yet hath outstayed his welcome while,
And tells the jest without the smile.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge [1772-1834]

THE OLD MAN'S COMFORTS

And How He Gained Them

"You are old, Father William," the young man cried;
"The few locks which are left you are gray;
You are hale, Father William, – a hearty old man:
Now tell me the reason, I pray."

"In the days of my youth," Father William replied,
"I remembered that youth would fly fast,
And abused not my health and my vigor at first,
That I never might need them at last."

"You are old, Father William," the young man cried,
"And pleasures with youth pass away;
And yet you lament not the days that are gone:
Now tell me the reason, I pray."

"In the days of my youth," Father William replied,
"I remembered that youth could not last;
I thought of the future, whatever I did,
That I never might grieve for the past."

"You are old, Father William," the young man cried,
"And life must be hastening away;
You are cheerful, and love to converse upon death:
Now tell me the reason, I pray."

"I am cheerful, young man," Father William replied;
"Let the cause thy attention engage;
In the days of my youth, I remembered my God,
And He hath not forgotten my age."

Robert Southey [1774–1843]

TO AGE

Welcome, old friend! These many years
Have we lived door by door:
The Fates have laid aside their shears
Perhaps for some few more.

I was indocile at an age
When better boys were taught,
But thou at length hast made me sage,
If I am sage in aught.

Little I know from other men,
Too little they from me,
But thou hast pointed well the pen
That writes these lines to thee.

Thanks for expelling Fear and Hope,
One vile, the other vain;
One's scourge, the other's telescope,
I shall not see again:

Rather what lies before my feet
My notice shall engage. –
He who hath braved Youth's dizzy heat
Dreads not the frost of Age.

Walter Savage Landor [1775–1864]

LATE LEAVES

The leaves are falling; so am I;
The few late flowers have moisture in the eye;
So have I too.
Scarcely on any bough is heard
Joyous, or even unjoyous, bird
The whole wood through.

Winter may come: he brings but nigher
His circle (yearly narrowing) to the fire
Where old friends meet.
Let him; now heaven is overcast,
And spring and summer both are past,
And all things sweet.

Walter Savage Landor [1775–1864]

YEARS

Years, many parti-colored years,
Some have crept on, and some have flown
Since first before me fell those tears
I never could see fall alone.

Years, not so many, are to come,
Years not so varied, when from you
One more will fall: when, carried home,
I see it not, nor hear Adieu.

Walter Savage Landor [1775–1864]

THE RIVER OF LIFE

The more we live, more brief appear
Our life's succeeding stages:
A day to childhood seems a year,
And years like passing ages.

The gladsome current of our youth,
Ere passion yet disorders,
Steals, lingering like a river smooth
Along its grassy borders.

But as the careworn cheek grows wan,
And sorrow's shafts fly thicker,
Ye Stars, that measure life to man,
Why seem your courses quicker?

When joys have lost their bloom and breath,
And life itself is vapid,
Why, as we reach the Falls of Death,
Feel we its tide more rapid?

It may be strange – yet who would change
Time's course to slower speeding,
When one by one our friends have gone
And left our bosoms bleeding?

Heaven gives our years of fading strength
Indemnifying fleetness;
And those of youth, a seeming length,
Proportioned to their sweetness.

Thomas Campbell [1777–1844]

"LONG TIME A CHILD"

Long time a child, and still a child, when years
Had painted manhood on my check, was I, –
For yet I lived like one not born to die;
A thriftless prodigal of smiles and tears,
No hope I needed, and I knew no fears.
But sleep, though sweet, is only sleep; and waking,
I waked to sleep no more; at once o'ertaking
The vanguard of my age, with all arrears
Of duty on my back. Nor child, nor man,
Nor youth, nor sage, I find my head is gray,
For I have lost the race I never ran:
A rathe December blights my lagging May;
And still I am a child, though I be old:
Time is my debtor for my years untold.

Hartley Coleridge [1796–1849]

THE WORLD I AM PASSING THROUGH

Few, in the days of early youth,
Trusted like me in love and truth.
I've learned sad lessons from the years;
But slowly, and with many tears;
For God made me to kindly view
The world that I was passing through.

How little did I once believe
That friendly tones could e'er deceive!
That kindness, and forbearance long,
Might meet ingratitude and wrong!
I could not help but kindly view
The world that I was passing through.

And though I've learned some souls are base,
I would not, therefore, hate the race;
I still would bless my fellow men,
And trust them, though deceived again.
God help me still to kindly view
The world that I am passing through!

Through weary conflicts I have passed,
And struggled into rest at last;
Such rest as when the rack has broke
A joint, or nerve, at every stroke.
The wish survives to kindly view
The world that I am passing through.

From all that fate has brought to me
I strive to learn humility,
And trust in Him who rules above,
Whose universal law is love.
Thus only can I kindly view
The world that I am passing through.

When I approach the setting sun,
And feel my journey nearly done,
May earth be veiled in genial light,
And her last smile to me seem bright!
Help me till then to kindly view
The world that I am passing through!

And all who tempt a trusting heart
From faith and hope to drift apart, –
May they themselves be spared the pain
Of losing power to trust again!

God help us all to kindly view
The world that we are passing through!

Lydia Maria Child [1802–1880]

TERMINUS

It is time to be old,
To take in sail: –
The god of bounds,
Who sets to seas a shore,
Came to me in his fatal rounds,
And said: "No more!
No farther shoot
Thy broad ambitious branches, and thy root.
Fancy departs: no more invent;
Contract thy firmament
To compass of a tent.
There's not enough for this and that,
Make thy option which of two;
Economize the failing river,
Not the less revere the Giver,
Leave the many and hold the few.
Timely wise accept the terms,
Soften the fall with wary foot;
A little while
Still plan and smile,
And, – fault of novel germs, –
Mature the unfallen fruit.
Curse, if thou wilt, thy sires,
Bad husbands of their fires,
Who, when they gave thee breath,
Failed to bequeath
The needful sinew stark as once,
The Baresark marrow to thy bones,
But left a legacy of ebbing veins,
Inconstant heat and nerveless reins, –
Amid the Muses, left thee deaf and dumb,
Amid the Gladiators, halt and numb."

As the bird trims her to the gale,
I trim myself to the storm of time,
I man the rudder, reef the sail,
Obey the voice at eve obeyed at prime:
"Lowly faithful, banish fear,
Right onward drive unharmed;
The port, well worth the cruise, is near,
And every wave is charmed."

Ralph Waldo Emerson [1803–1882]

RABBI BEN EZRA

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in his hand
Who saith "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"

Not that, amassing flowers,
Youth sighed, "Which rose make ours,
Which lily leave and then as best recall?"
Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned, "Nor Jove, nor Mars;
Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all!"

Not for such hopes and fears
Annulling youth's brief years,
Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!
Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without.
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
Irks care the crop–full bird? Frets doubt the maw–crammed beast?

Rejoice we are allied
To that which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of his tribes that take, I must believe.

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three–parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

For thence, – a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks, –
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
What I aspired to be,

And was not, comforts me:
A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

What is he but a brute
Whose flesh has soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play?
To man, propose this test –
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

Yet gifts should prove their use:
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn:
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole:
Should not the heart beat once "How good to live and learn"?

Not once beat "Praise be thine!
I see the whole design,
I, who saw power, see now Love perfect too:
Perfect I call thy plan:
Thanks that I was a man!
Maker, remake, complete, – I trust what thou shalt do!"

For pleasant is this flesh;
Our soul, in its rose-mesh
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest:
Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold
Possessions of the brute, – gain most, as we did best!

Let us not always say,
"Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
As the bird wings and sings;
Let us cry, "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term:
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a God though in the germ.

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and new:
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armor to indue.

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby;
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold:
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame:
Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the gray:
A whisper from the west
Shoots – "Add this to the rest,
Take it and try its worth: here dies another day."

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
"This rage was right i' the main,
That acquiescence vain:
The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day:
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made:
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedest age: wait death nor be afraid!

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past!
Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

Now, who shall arbitrate?

Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me: we all surmise,
They this thing, and I that: whom shall my soul believe?

Not on the vulgar mass
Called "work," must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay, –
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
"Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day?"

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

He fixed thee 'mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, would fain arrest:
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?

What though, about thy rim,
Scull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips a-glow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needest thou with earth's wheel?

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who moulded men;
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I – to the wheel of life
With shapes and colors rife,
Bound dizzily, – mistake my end, to slake thy thirst:

So, take and use thy work:
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

Robert Browning [1812–1889]

HUMAN LIFE

Sad is our youth, for it is ever going,
Crumbling away beneath our very feet;
Sad is our life, for onward it is flowing,
In current unperceived because so fleet;
Sad are our hopes for they were sweet in sowing,
But tares, self-sown, have overtopped the wheat;
Sad are our joys, for they were sweet in blowing;
And still, O still, their dying breath is sweet:
And sweet is youth, although it hath bereft us
Of that which made our childhood sweeter still;
And sweet our life's decline, for it hath left us
A nearer Good to cure an older Ill:
And sweet are all things, when we learn to prize them
Not for their sake, but His who grants them or denies them.

Aubrey Thomas de Vere [1814–1902]

YOUNG AND OLD

From "The Water Babies"

When all the world is young, lad,
And all the trees are green;
And every goose a swan, lad,
And every lass a queen;
Then hey for boot and horse, lad,
And round the world away;
Young blood must have its course, lad,
And every dog his day.

When all the world is old, lad,
And all the trees are brown;
And all the sport is stale, lad,
And all the wheels run down:
Creep home, and take your place there,
The spent and maimed among:
God grant you find one face there
You loved when all was young.

Charles Kingsley [1819–1875]

THE ISLE OF THE LONG AGO

Oh, a wonderful stream is the River Time,
As it flows through the realm of Tears,
With a faultless rhythm and a musical rhyme,
And a broader sweep and a surge sublime
As it blends with the ocean of Years.

How the winters are drifting like flakes of snow!
And the summers like buds between;
And the year in the sheaf – so they come and they go
On the River's breast with its ebb and flow,
As they glide in the shadow and sheen.

There's a magical Isle up the River Time
Where the softest of airs are playing;
There's a cloudless sky and a tropical clime,
And a voice as sweet as a vesper chime,
And the Junes with the roses are staying.

And the name of this Isle is the Long Ago,
And we bury our treasures there;
There are brows of beauty and bosoms of snow –
They are heaps of dust, but we loved them so!
There are trinkets and tresses of hair.

There are fragments of song that nobody sings,
And a part of an infant's prayer,
There's a harp unswept and a lute without strings,
There are broken vows and pieces of rings,
And the garments that she used to wear.

There are hands that are waved when the fairy shore
By the mirage is lifted in air;
And we sometimes hear through the turbulent roar
Sweet voices we heard in the days gone before,
When the wind down the River is fair.

Oh, remembered for aye be the blessed Isle
All the day of our life till night,
And when evening comes with its beautiful smile,
And our eyes are closing in slumber awhile,
May that "Greenwood" of soul be in sight.

Benjamin Franklin Taylor [1819–1887]

GROWING OLD

What is it to grow old?
Is it to lose the glory of the form,
The lustre of the eye?
Is it for beauty to forego her wealth?
– Yes, but not this alone.

Is it to feel our strength –
Not our bloom only, but our strength – decay?
Is it to feel each limb
Grow stiffer, every function less exact,
Each nerve more loosely strung?

Yes, this, and more; but not –
Ah, 'tis not what in youth we dreamed 'twould be!
'Tis not to have our life
Mellowed and softened as with sunset glow,
A golden day's decline.

'Tis not to see the world
As from a height, with rapt prophetic eyes,
And heart profoundly stirred;
And weep, and feel the fulness of the past,
The years that are no more.

It is to spend long days
And not once feel that we were ever young;
It is to add, immured
In the hot prison of the present, month
To month with weary pain.

It is to suffer this,
And feel but half, and feebly, what we feel.
Deep in our hidden heart
Festers the dull remembrance of a change,
But no emotion – none.

It is! – last stage of all –
When we are frozen up within, and quite
The phantom of ourselves,
To hear the world applaud the hollow ghost
Which blessed the living man.

Matthew Arnold [1822–1888]

PAST

The clocks are chiming in my heart
Their cobweb chime;
Old murmurings of days that die,
The sob of things a-drifting by.
The clocks are chiming in my heart!

The stars have twinkled, and gone out –
Fair candles blown!
The hot desires burn low, and wan
Those ashy fires, that flamed anon.
The stars have twinkled, and gone out!

John Galsworthy [1867–1933]

TWILIGHT

When I was young the twilight seemed too long.
How often on the western window-seat
I leaned my book against the misty pane
And spelled the last enchanting lines again,
The while my mother hummed an ancient song,
Or sighed a little and said: "The hour is sweet!"
When I, rebellious, clamored for the light.

But now I love the soft approach of night,
And now with folded hands I sit and dream
While all too fleet the hours of twilight seem;
And thus I know that I am growing old.

O granaries of Age! O manifold
And royal harvest of the common years!
There are in all thy treasure-house no ways
But lead by soft descent and gradual slope
To memories more exquisite than hope.
Thine is the Iris born of olden tears,
And thrice more happy are the happy days
That live divinely in the lingering rays.

A. Mary F. Robinson [1857-

YOUTH AND AGE

Youth hath many charms, –
Hath many joys, and much delight;
Even its doubts, and vague alarms,
By contrast make it bright:
And yet – and yet – forsooth,
I love Age as well as Youth!

Well, since I love them both,
The good of both I will combine, –
In women, I will look for Youth,
And look for Age, in wine:
And then – and then – I'll bless
This twain that gives me happiness!

George Arnold [1834–1865]

FORTY YEARS ON

Forty years on, when afar and asunder
Parted are those who are singing today,
When you look back, and forgetfully wonder
What you were like in your work and your play;
Then, it may be, there will often come o'er you
Glimpses of notes like the catch of a song –
Visions of boyhood shall float them before you,
Echoes of dreamland shall bear them along.
Follow up! Follow up! Follow up! Follow up!
Till the field ring again and again,
With the tramp of the twenty-two men,
Follow up! Follow up!

Routs and discomfitures, rushes and rallies,
Bases attempted, and rescued, and won,
Strife without anger, and art without malice, –
How will it seem to you forty years on?
Then, you will say, not a feverish minute
Strained the weak heart, and the wavering knee,
Never the battle raged hottest, but in it
Neither the last nor the faintest were we!
Follow up! Follow up!

O the great days, in the distance enchanted,
Days of fresh air, in the rain and the sun,
How we rejoiced as we struggled and panted –
Hardly believable forty years on!
How we discoursed of them, one with another,
Auguring triumph, or balancing fate,
Loved the ally with the heart of a brother,
Hated the foe with a playing at hate!
Follow up! Follow up!

Forty years on, growing older and older,
Shorter in wind, and in memory long,
Feeble of foot and rheumatic of shoulder,
What will it help you that once you were strong?
God gives us bases to guard or beleaguer,
Games to play out, whether earnest or fun,
Fights for the fearless, and goals for the eager,
Twenty, and thirty, and forty years on!
Follow up! Follow up!

Edward Ernest Bowen [1836–1901]

DREGS

The fire is out, and spent the warmth thereof,
(This is the end of every song man sings!)
The golden wine is drunk, the dregs remain,
Bitter as wormwood and as salt as pain;
And health and hope have gone the way of love
Into the drear oblivion of lost things.
Ghosts go along with us until the end;
This was a mistress, this, perhaps, a friend.
With pale, indifferent eyes, we sit and wait
For the dropped curtain and the closing gate:
This is the end of all the songs man sings.

Ernest Dowson [1867–1900]

THE PARADOX OF TIME

A Variation On Ronsard

"Le temps s'en va, le temps s'en va, ma dame!
Las! le temps non: mais nous nous en allons!"

Time goes, you say? Ah no!
Alas, Time stays, we go;
Or else, were this not so,
What need to chain the hours,
For Youth were always ours?
Time goes, you say? – ah no!

Ours is the eyes' deceit
Of men whose flying feet
Lead through some landscape low;
We pass, and think we see
The earth's fixed surface flee: –
Alas, Time stays – we go!

Once in the days of old,
Your locks were curling gold,
And mine had shamed the crow.
Now, in the self–same stage,
We've reached the silver age;
Time goes, you say? – ah no!

Once, when my voice was strong,
I filled the woods with song
To praise your "rose" and "snow";
My bird, that sang, is dead;
Where are your roses fled?
Alas, Time stays – we go!

See, in what traversed ways,
What backward Fate delays
The hopes we used to know;
Where are our old desires? –
Ah, where those vanished fires?
Time goes, you say? – ah no!

How far, how far, O sweet,
The past behind our feet
Lies in the even–glow!
Now, on the forward way,
Let us fold hands, and pray;
Alas, Time stays, – we go!

Austin Dobson [1840–1921]

AGE

Snow and stars, the same as ever
In the days when I was young, –
But their silver song, ah never,
Never now is sung!

Cold the stars are, cold the earth is,
Everything is grim and cold!
Strange and drear the sound of mirth is –
Life and I are old!

William Winter [1836–1917]

OMNIA SOMNIA

Dawn drives the dreams away, yet some abide.
Once, in a tide of pale and sunless weather,
I dreamed I wandered on a bare hillside,
When suddenly the birds sang all together.

Still it was Winter, even in the dream;
There was no leaf nor bud nor young grass springing;
The skies shone cold above the frost-bound stream:
It was not Spring, and yet the birds were singing.

Blackbird and thrush and plaintive willow-wren,
Chaffinch and lark and linnet, all were calling;
A golden web of music held me then,
Innumerable voices, rising, falling.

O, never do the birds of April sing
More sweet than in that dream I still remember:
Perchance the heart may keep its songs of Spring
Even through the wintry dream of life's December.

Rosamund Marriott Watson [1863–1911]

THE YEAR'S END

Full happy is the man who comes at last
Into the safe completion of his year;
Weathered the perils of his spring, that blast
How many blossoms promising and dear!
And of his summer, with dread passions fraught
That oft, like fire through the ripening corn,
Blight all with mocking death and leave distraught
Loved ones to mourn the ruined waste forlorn.
But now, though autumn gave but harvest slight,
Oh, grateful is he to the powers above
For winter's sunshine, and the lengthened night
By hearth-side genial with the warmth of love.
Through silvered days of vistas gold and green
Contentedly he glides away, serene.

Timothy Cole [1852–1931]

AN OLD MAN'S SONG

Ye are young, ye are young,
I am old, I am old;
And the song has been sung
And the story been told.

Your locks are as brown
As the mavis in May,
Your hearts are as warm
As the sunshine to-day,
But mine white and cold
As the snow on the brae.

And Love, like a flower,
Is growing for you,
Hands clasping, lips meeting,
Hearts beating so true;
While Fame like a star
In the midnight afar
Is flashing for you.

For you the To-come,
But for me the Gone-by,
You are panting to live,
I am waiting to die;
The meadow is empty,
No flower groweth high,
And naught but a socket
The face of the sky.

Yea, how so we dream,
Or how bravely we do;
The end is the same,
Be we traitor or true:
And after the bloom
And the passion is past,
Death cometh at last.

Richard Le Gallienne [1866-

SONGS OF SEVEN

Seven Times One. – EXULTATION

There's no dew left on the daisies and clover,
There's no rain left in heaven;
I've said my "seven times" over and over,
Seven times one are seven.

I am old, so old, I can write a letter;
My birthday lessons are done;
The lambs play always, they know no better;
They are only one times one.

O moon! in the night I have seen you sailing
And shining so round and low;
You were bright! ah, bright! but your light is failing, –
You are nothing now but a bow.

You moon, have you done something wrong in heaven
That God has hidden your face?
I hope if you have, you will soon be forgiven,
And shine again in your place.

O velvet bee, you're a dusty fellow,
You've powdered your legs with gold!
O brave marsh marybuds, rich and yellow,
Give me your money to hold!

O columbine, open your folded wrapper,
Where two twin turtle-doves dwell?
O cuckoopint, toll me the purple clapper
That hangs in your clear green bell!

And show me your nest with the young ones in it;
I will not steal them away;
I am old! you may trust me, linnet, linnet, –
I am seven times one to-day.

Seven Times Two. – ROMANCE

You bells in the steeple, ring, ring out your changes,
How many soever they be,

And let the brown meadow–lark's note as he ranges
Come over, come over to me.

Yet birds' clearest carol by fall or by swelling
No magical sense conveys,
And bells have forgotten their old art of telling
The fortune of future days

"Turn again, turn again," once they rang cheerily,
While a boy listened alone;
Made his heart yearn again, musing so wearily
All by himself on a stone.

Poor bells! I forgive you; your good days are over,
And mine, they are yet to be;
No listening, no longing shall aught, aught discover:
You leave the story to me.

The foxglove shoots out of the green matted heather
Preparing her hoods of snow;
She was idle, and slept till the sunshiny weather:
Oh! children take long to grow.

I wish and I wish that the spring would go faster,
Nor long summer bide so late;
And I could grow on like the foxglove and aster,
For some things are ill to wait.

I wait for the day when dear hearts shall discover,
While dear hands are laid on my head;
"The child is a woman, the book may close over,
For all the lessons are said."

I wait for my story, – the birds cannot sing it,
Not one, as he sits on the tree;
The bells cannot ring it, but long years, oh, bring it!
Such as I wish it to be.

Seven Times Three. – LOVE

I leaned out of window, I smelt the white clover,
Dark, dark was the garden, I saw not the gate,
"Now, if there be footsteps, he comes, my one lover, –

Hush, nightingale, hush! O sweet nightingale, wait
Till I listen and hear
If a step draweth near,
For my love he is late!

"The skies in the darkness stoop nearer and nearer,
A cluster of stars hangs like fruit in the tree,
The fall of the water comes sweeter, comes clearer:
To what art thou listening, and what dost thou see?
Let the star-clusters grow,
Let the sweet waters flow,
And cross quickly to me.

"You night-moths that hover, where honey brims over
From sycamore blossoms, or settle or sleep;
You glowworms, shine out, and the pathway discover
To him that comes darkling along the rough steep.
Ah, my sailor, make haste,
For the time runs to waste,
And my love lieth deep, –

"Too deep for swift telling; and yet, my one lover,
I've conned thee an answer, it waits thee to-night."
By the sycamore passed he, and through the white clover,
Then all the sweet speech I had fashioned took flight;
But I'll love him more, more
Than e'er wife loved before,
Be the days dark or bright.

Seven Times Four. – MATERNITY

Heigh-ho! daisies and buttercups!
Fair yellow daffodils, stately and tall!
When the wind wakes how they rock in the grasses,
And dance with the cuckoo-buds slender and small!
Here's two bonny boys, and here's mother's own lasses,
Eager to gather them all.

Heigh-ho! daisies and buttercups;
Mother shall thread them a daisy chain;
Sing them a song of the pretty hedge-sparrow,
That loved her brown little ones, loved them full fain;
Sing, "Heart, thou art wide though the house be but narrow," –
Sing once, and sing it again.

Heigh-ho! daisies and buttercups!
Sweet wagging cowslips, they bend and they bow;
A ship sails afar over warm ocean waters,
And haply one musing doth stand at her prow.
O bonny brown sons, and O sweet little daughters,
Maybe he thinks of you now.

Seven Times Two. – ROMANCE

Heigh–ho! daisies and buttercups!
Fair yellow daffodils, stately and tall!
A sunshiny world full of laughter and leisure,
And fresh hearts unconscious of sorrow and thrall!
Send down on their pleasure smiles passing its measure,
God that is over us all!

Seven Times Five. – WIDOWHOOD

I sleep and rest, my heart makes moan
Before I am well awake;
"Let me bleed! O let me alone,
Since I must not break!"

For children wake, though fathers sleep
With a stone at foot and at head:
O sleepless God, forever keep,
Keep both living and dead!

I lift mine eyes, and what to see
But a world happy and fair!
I have not wished it to mourn with me, –
Comfort is not there.

Oh, what anear but golden brooms,
But a waste of reedy rills!
Oh, what afar but the fine glooms
On the rare blue hills!

I shall not die, but live forlore, –
How bitter it is to part!
Oh, to meet thee, my love, once more!
O my heart, my heart!

No more to hear, no more to see!
Oh, that an echo might wake
And waft one note of thy psalm to me
Ere my heart–strings break!

I should know it how faint soe'er,
And with angel voices blent;
Oh, once to feel thy spirit anear;
I could be content!

Or once between the gates of gold,
While an entering angel trod,
But once, – thee sitting to behold
On the hills of God!

Seven Times Six. – GIVING IN MARRIAGE

Seven Times Two. – ROMANCE

To bear, to nurse, to rear,
To watch, and then to lose:
To see my bright ones disappear,
Drawn up like morning dews, –
To bear, to nurse, to rear,
To watch and then to lose:
This have I done when God drew near
Among his own to choose.

To hear, to heed, to wed,
And with thy lord depart
In tears, that he, as soon as shed,
Will let no longer smart, –
To hear, to heed, to wed,
This while thou didst I smiled,
For now it was not God who said,
"Mother, give ME thy child."

O fond, O fool, and blind!
To God I gave with tears;
But when a man like grace would find,
My soul put by her fears, –
O fond, O fool, and blind!
God guards in happier spheres;
That man will guard where he did bind
Is hope for unknown years.

To hear, to heed, to wed,
Fair lot that maidens choose,
Thy mother's tenderest words are said,
Thy face no more she views;
Thy mother's lot, my dear,
She doth in naught accuse;
Her lot to bear, to nurse, to rear,
To love, – and then to lose.

Seven Times Seven. – LONGING FOR HOME

A song of a boat: –
There was once a boat on a billow:
Lightly she rocked to her port remote,
And the foam was white in her wake like snow,
And her frail mast bowed when the breeze would blow,
And bent like a wand of willow.

I shaded mine eyes one day when a boat
Went curtsying over the billow,
I marked her course till a dancing mote,
She faded out on the moonlit foam,
And I stayed behind in the dear-loved home;

Seven Times Two. – ROMANCE

And my thoughts all day were about the boat,
And my dreams upon the pillow.

I pray you hear my song of a boat
For it is but short: –
My boat you shall find none fairer afloat,
In river or port.
Long I looked out for the lad she bore,
On the open desolate sea,
And I think he sailed to the heavenly shore,
For he came not back to me –
Ah me!

A song of a nest: –
There was once a nest in a hollow:
Down in the mosses and knot-grass pressed,
Soft and warm and full to the brim –
Vetches leaned over it purple, and dim,
With buttercup buds to follow.

I pray you hear my song of a nest,
For it is not long: –
You shall never light in a summer quest
The bushes among –
Shall never light on a prouder sitter,
A fairer nestful, nor ever know
A softer sound than their tender twitter,
That wind-like did come and go.

I had a nestful once of my own,
Ah, happy, happy I!
Right dearly I loved them; but when they were grown
They spread out their wings to fly –
Oh, one after one they flew away
Far up to the heavenly blue,
To the better country, the upper day,
And – I wish I was going too.

I pray you what is the nest to me,
My empty nest?
And what is the shore where I stood to see
My boat sail down to the west?
Can I call that home where I anchor yet,
Though my good man has sailed?
Can I call that home where my nest was set,
Now all its hope hath failed?

Nay, but the port where my sailor went,
And the land where my nestlings be:
There is the home where my thoughts are sent
The only home for me –

Ah me!

Jean Ingelow [1820–1897]

AUSPEX

My heart, I cannot still it,
Nest that had song—birds in it;
And when the last shall go,
The dreary days, to fill it,
Instead of lark or linnet,
Shall whirl dead leaves and snow.

Had they been swallows only,
Without the passion stronger
That skyward longs and sings, —
Woe's me, I shall be lonely
When I can feel no longer
The impatience of their wings!

A moment, sweet delusion,
Like birds the brown leaves hover;
But it will not be long
Before their wild confusion
Fall wavering down to cover
The poet and his song.

James Russell Lowell [1819–1891]

The Home Book of Verse, V1

LOOKING BACKWARD

THE RETREAT

Happy those early days, when I
Shined in my Angel–infancy!
Before I understood this place
Appointed for my second race,
Or taught my soul to fancy aught
But a white, celestial thought;
When yet I had not walked above
A mile or two from my first Love,
And looking back, at that short space,
Could see a glimpse of His bright face;
When on some gilded cloud or flower
My gazing soul would dwell an hour,
And in those weaker glories spy
Some shadows of eternity;
Before I taught my tongue to wound
My Conscience with a sinful sound,
Or had the black art to dispense
A several sin to every sense;
But felt through all this fleshly dress
Bright shoots of everlastingness.

O how I long to travel back,
And tread again that ancient track!
That I might once more reach that plain
Where first I left my glorious train;
From whence the enlightened spirit sees
That shady City of Palm–trees.
But ah! my soul with too much stay
Is drunk, and staggers in the way!
Some men a forward motion love,
But I by backward steps would move;
And, when this dust falls to the urn,
In that state I came, return.

Henry Vaughan [1622–1695]

A SUPERScription

Look in my face; my name is Might–have–been;
I am also called No–more, Too–late, Farewell;
Unto thine ear I hold the dead–sea shell
Cast up thy Life's foam–fretted feet between;
Unto thine eyes the glass where that is seen
Which had Life's form and Love's, but by my spell
Is now a shaken shadow intolerable,
Of ultimate things unuttered the frail screen.
Mark me, how still I am! But should there dart
One moment through thy soul the soft surprise
Of that winged Peace which lulls the breath of sighs, –
Then shalt thou see me smile, and turn apart
Thy visage to mine ambush at thy heart
Sleepless with cold commemorative eyes.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti [1828–1882]

THE CHILD IN THE GARDEN

When to the garden of untroubled thought
I came of late, and saw the open door,
And wished again to enter, and explore
The sweet, wild ways with stainless bloom inwrought,
And bowers of innocence with beauty fraught,
It seemed some purer voice must speak before
I dared to tread that garden loved of yore,
That Eden lost unknown and found unsought.
Then just within the gate I saw a child, –
A stranger-child, yet to my heart most dear, –
Who held his hands to me and softly smiled
With eyes that knew no shade of sin or fear;
"Come in," he said, "and play awhile with me;

I am the little child you used to be."

Henry Van Dyke [1852–1933]

CASTLES IN THE AIR

My thoughts by night are often filled
With visions false as fair:
For in the Past alone I build
My castles in the air.

I dwell not now on what may be;
Night shadows o'er the scene;
But still my fancy wanders free
Through that which might have been.

Thomas Love Peacock [1785–1866]

SOMETIMES

Across the fields of yesterday
He sometimes comes to me,
A little lad just back from play –
The lad I used to be.

And yet he smiles so wistfully
Once he has crept within,
I wonder if he hopes to see
The man I might have been.

Thomas S. Jones, Jr. [1882–1932]

THE LITTLE GHOSTS

Where are they gone, and do you know
If they come back at fall o' dew,
The little ghosts of long ago,
That long ago were you?

And all the songs that ne'er were sung.
And all the dreams that ne'er came true,
Like little children dying young –
Do they come back to you?

Thomas S. Jones, Jr. [1882–1932]

MY OTHER ME

Children, do you ever,
In walks by land or sea,
Meet a little maiden
Long time lost to me?

She is gay and gladsome,
Has a laughing face,
And a heart as sunny;
And her name is Grace.

Naught she knows of sorrow,
Naught of doubt or blight;
Heaven is just above her –
All her thoughts are white.

Long time since I lost her,
That other Me of mine;
She crossed, into Time's shadow
Out of Youth's sunshine.

Now the darkness keeps her;
And, call her as I will,
The years that lie between us
Hide her from me still.

I am dull and pain-worn,
And lonely as can be –
Oh, children, if you meet her,
Send back my other Me!

Grace Denio Litchfield [1849–

A SHADOW BOAT

Under my keel another boat
Sails as I sail, floats as I float;
Silent and dim and mystic still,
It steals through that weird nether-world,
Mocking my power, though at my will
The foam before its prow is curled,
Or calm it lies, with canvas furled.

Vainly I peer, and fain would see
What phantom in that boat may be;
Yet half I dread, lest I with ruth
Some ghost of my dead past divine,
Some gracious shape of my lost youth,
Whose deathless eyes once fixed on mine
Would draw me downward through the brine!

Arlo Bates [1850–1918]

A LAD THAT IS GONE

Sing me a song of a lad that is gone;
Say, could that lad be I?
Merry of soul he sailed on a day
Over the sea to Skye.

Mull was astern, Rum on the port,
Eigg on the starboard bow;
Glory of youth glowed in his soul:
Where is that glory now?

Sing me a song of a lad that is gone;
Say, could that lad be I?
Merry of soul he sailed on a day
Over the sea to Skye.

Give me again all that was there,
Give me the sun that shone!
Give me the eyes, give me the soul,
Give me the lad that's gone!

Sing me a song of a lad that is gone;
Say, could that lad be I?
Merry of soul he sailed on a day
Over the sea to Skye.

Billow and breeze, islands and seas,
Mountains of rain and sun,
All that was good, all that was fair,
All that was me is gone.

Robert Louis Stevenson [1850–1894]

CARCASSONNE

"I'm growing old, I've sixty years;
I've labored all my life in vain.
In all that time of hopes and fears,
I've failed my dearest wish to gain.
I see full well that here below
Bliss unalloyed there is for none;
My prayer would else fulfilment know –
Never have I seen Carcassonne!

"You see the city from the hill,
It lies beyond the mountains blue;
And yet to reach it one must still
Five long and weary leagues pursue,
And, to return, as many more.
Had but the vintage plenteous grown –
But, ah! the grape withheld its store.
I shall not look on Carcassonne!

"They tell me every day is there
Not more or less than Sunday gay;
In shining robes and garments fair
The people walk upon their way.
One gazes there on castle walls
As grand as those of Babylon,
A bishop and two generals!
What joy to dwell in Carcassonne!

"The vicar's right: he says that we
Are ever wayward, weak, and blind;
He tells us in his homily
Ambition ruins all mankind;
Yet could I there two days have spent,
While still the autumn sweetly shone,
Ah, me! I might have died content
When I had looked on Carcassonne.

"Thy pardon, Father, I beseech,
In this my prayer if I offend;
One something sees beyond his reach
From childhood to his journey's end.
My wife, our little boy, Aignan,
Have travelled even to Narbonne;
My grandchild has seen Perpignan;
And I – have not seen Carcassonne!"

So crooned, one day, close by Limoux,
A peasant, double-bent with age.
"Rise up, my friend," said I; "with you
I'll go upon this pilgrimage."
We left, next morning, his abode,
But (Heaven forgive him!) half-way on
The old man died upon the road.
He never gazed on Carcassonne.

Translated by John R. Thompson from the French of
Gustave Nadaud [1820- ?]

CHILDHOOD

Old Sorrow I shall meet again,
And Joy, perchance – but never, never,
Happy Childhood, shall we twain
See each other's face forever!

And yet I would not call thee back,
Dear Childhood, lest the sight of me,
Thine old companion, on the rack
Of Age, should sadden even thee.

John Banister Tabb [1845–1909]

THE WASTREL

Once, when I was little, as the summer night was falling,
Among the purple upland fields I lost my barefoot way;
The road to home was hidden fast, and frightful shadows, crawling
Along the sky-line, swallowed up the last kind light of day;
And then I seemed to hear you
In the twilight; and be near you;
Seemed to hear your dear voice calling –
Through the meadows, calling, calling –
And I followed and I found you,
Flung my tired arms around you,
And rested on the mother-breast, returned, tired out from play.

Down the days from that day, though I trod strange paths unheeding,
Though I chased the jack-o'-lanterns of so many maddened years,
Though I never looked behind me, where the home-lights were receding,
Though I never looked enough ahead to ken the Inn of Fears;
Still I knew your heart was near me,
That your ear was strained to hear me,
That your love would need no pleading
To forgive me, but was pleading
Of its self that, in disaster,
I should run to you the faster
And be sure that I was dearer for your sacrifice of tears.

Now on life's last Summertime the long last dusk is falling,
And I, who trod one way so long, can tread no other way
Until at death's dim crossroads I watch, hesitant, the crawling
Night-passages that maze me with the ultimate dismay.
Then when Death and Doubt shall blind me –
Even then – I know you'll find me:
I shall hear you, Mother, calling –
Hear you calling – calling – calling:
I shall fight and follow – find you
Though the grave-clothes swathe and bind you,
And I know your love will answer: "Here's my laddie home from play!"

Reginald Wright Kauffman [1877–

TROIA FUIT

The world was wide when I was young,
My schoolday hills and dales among;
But, oh, it needs no Puck to put,
With whipping wing and flying foot,
A girdle 'round the narrow sphere
In which I labor now and here!

Life's face was fair when careless I
First loved beneath an April sky,
And wept those fine–imagined woes
That youth at nineteen thinks it knows;
Now love and woe both run so deep
I have not any time to weep.

No matter; though at last we see
That what was could not always be,
It girds our loins and steels our hands
In duller days and smaller lands
To recollect the country where
The world was wide and life was fair.

Reginald Wright Kauffman [1877–

TEMPLE GARLANDS

There is a temple in my heart
Where moth or rust can never come,
A temple swept and set apart,
To make my soul a home.

And round about the doors of it
Hang garlands that forever last,
That gathered once are always sweet;
The roses of the Past!

A. Mary F. Robinson [1857–

TIME LONG PAST

Like the ghost of a dear friend dead
Is Time long past.
A tone which is now forever fled,
A hope which is now forever past,
A love so sweet it could not last,
Was Time long past.

There were sweet dreams in the night
Of Time long past:
And, was it sadness or delight,
Each day a shadow onward cast
Which made us wish it yet might last, –
That Time long past.

There is regret, almost remorse,
For Time long past.
'Tis like a child's beloved corse
A father watches, till at last
Beauty is like remembrance, cast
From Time long past.

Percy Bysshe Shelley [1792–1822]

"I REMEMBER, I REMEMBER"

I remember, I remember
The house where I was born,
The little window where the sun
Came peeping in at morn;
He never came a wink too soon
Nor brought too long a day;
But now, I often wish the night
Had borne my breath away.

I remember, I remember
The roses, red and white,
The violets, and the lily-cups –
Those flowers made of light!
The lilacs where the robin built,
And where my brother set
The laburnum on his birthday, –
The tree is living yet!

I remember, I remember
Where I was used to swing,
And though the air must rush as fresh
To swallows on the wing;
My spirit flew in feathers then
That is so heavy now,
The summer pools could hardly cool
The fever on my brow.

I remember, I remember
The fir-trees dark and high;
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky:
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from Heaven
Than when I was a boy.

Thomas Hood [1799–1845]

MY LOST YOUTH

Often I think of the beautiful town
That is seated by the sea;
Often in thought go up and down
The pleasant streets of that dear old town,
And my youth comes back to me.
And a verse of a Lapland song
Is haunting my memory still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth, are long, long thoughts."

I can see the shadowy lines of its trees,
And catch, in sudden gleams,
The sheen of the far-surrounding seas,
And islands that were the Hesperides
Of all my boyish dreams.
And the burden of that old song,
It murmurs and whispers still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the black wharves and the slips,
And the sea-tides tossing free;
And Spanish sailors with bearded lips,
And the beauty and mystery of the ships,
And the magic of the sea.
And the voice of that wayward song
Is singing and saying still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the bulwarks by the shore,
And the fort upon the hill;
The sunrise gun, with its hollow roar,
The drum-beat repeated o'er and o'er,
And the bugle wild and shrill.
And the music of that old song
Throbs in my memory still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the sea-fight far away,
How it thundered o'er the tide!
And the dead captains, as they lay
In their graves, o'erlooking the tranquil bay
Where they in battle died.
And the sound of that mournful song

Goes through me with a thrill:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I can see the breezy dome of groves,
The shadows of Deering's Woods;
And the friendships old and the early loves
Come back with a Sabbath sound, as of doves
In quiet neighborhoods.
And the verse of that sweet old song,
It flutters and murmurs still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the gleams and glooms that dart
Across the school-boy's brain;
The song and the silence in the heart,
That in part are prophecies, and in part
Are longings wild and vain.
And the voice of that fitful song
Sings on, and is never still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

There are things of which I may not speak;
There are dreams that cannot die;
There are thoughts that make the strong heart weak,
And bring a pallor into the cheek,
And a mist before the eye.
And the words of that fatal song
Come over me like a chill:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts"

Strange to me are the forms I meet
When I visit the dear old town;
But the native air is pure and sweet,
And the trees that o'ershadow each well-known street,
As they balance up and down,
Are singing the beautiful song,
Are sighing and whispering still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

And Deering's Woods are fresh and fair,
And with joy that is almost pain
My heart goes back to wander there,
And among the dreams of the days that were
I find my lost youth again.
And the strange and beautiful song,
The groves are repeating it still:

"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow [1807–1882]

"VOICE OF THE WESTERN WIND"

Voice of the western wind!
Thou singest from afar,
Rich with the music of a land
Where all my memories are;
But in thy song I only hear
The echo of a tone
That fell divinely on my ear
In days forever flown.

Star of the western sky!
Thou beamest from afar,
With lustre caught from eyes I knew
Whose orbs were each a star;
But, oh, those orbs – too wildly bright –
No more eclipse thine own,
And never shall I find the light
Of days forever flown!

Edmund Clarence Stedman [1833–1908]

LANGSYNE, WHEN LIFE WAS BONNIE"

Langsyne, when life was bonnie,
An' a' the skies were blue,
When ilka thocht took blossom,
An' hung its heid wi' dew,
When winter wasna winter,
Though snaws cam' happin' doon,
Langsyne, when life was bonnie,
Spring gaed a twalmonth roun'.

Langsyne, when life was bonnie,
An' a' the days were lang;
When through them ran the music
That comes to us in sang,
We never wearied liltin'
The auld love-laden tune;
Langsyne, when life was bonnie,
Love gaed a twalmonth roun'.

Langsyne, when life was bonnie,
An' a' the warld was fair,
The leaves were green wi' simmer,
For autumn wasna there.
But listen hoo they rustle,
Wi' an eerie, weary soun',
For noo, alas, 'tis winter
That gangs a twalmonth roun'.

Alexander Anderson [1845–1909]

THE SHOOGY-SHOO

I do be thinking, lassie, of the old days now;
For oh! your hair is tangled gold above your Irish brow;
And oh! your eyes are fairy flax! no other eyes so blue;
Come nestle in my arms, and swing upon the shoogy-shoo.

Sweet and slow, swinging low, eyes of Irish blue,
All my heart is swinging, dear, swinging here with you;
Irish eyes are like the flax, and mine are wet with dew,
Thinking of the old days upon the shoogy-shoo.

When meadow-larks would singing be in old Glentair,
Was one sweet lass had eyes of blue and tangled golden hair;
She was a wee bit girleen then, dear heart, the like of you,
When we two swung the braes among, upon the shoogy-shoo.

Ah well, the world goes up and down, and some sweet day
Its shoogy-shoo will swing us two where sighs will pass away;
So nestle close your bonnie head, and close your eyes so true,
And swing with me, and memory, upon the shoogy-shoo.

Sweet and slow, swinging low, eyes of Irish blue,
All my heart is swinging, dear, swinging here with you;
Irish eyes are like the flax, and mine are wet with dew,
Thinking of the old days upon the shoogy-shoo.

Winthrop Packard [1862-

BABYLON

"We shall meet again in Babylon."

I'm going softly all my years in wisdom if in pain –
For, oh, the music stirs my blood as once it did before,
And still I hear in Babylon, in Babylon, in Babylon,
The dancing feet in Babylon, of those who took my floor.

I'm going silent all my years, but garnered in my brain
Is that swift wit which used to flash and cut them like a sword –
And now I hear in Babylon, in Babylon, in Babylon,
The foolish tongues in Babylon, of those who took my word.

I'm going lonely all my days, who was the first to crave
The second, fierce, unsteady voice, that struggled to speak free –
And now I watch in Babylon, in Babylon, in Babylon,
The pallid loves in Babylon of men who once loved me.

I'm sleeping early by a flame as one content and gray,
But, oh, I dream a dream of dreams beneath a winter moon,
I breathe the breath of Babylon, of Babylon, of Babylon,
The scent of silks in Babylon that floated to a tune.

A band of years has flogged me out – an exile's fate is mine,
To sit with mumbling crones and still a heart that cries with youth.
But, oh, to walk in Babylon, in Babylon, in Babylon,
The happy streets in Babylon, when once the dream was truth.

Viola Taylor [18

THE ROAD OF REMEMBRANCE

The old wind stirs the hawthorn tree;
The tree is blossoming;
Northward the road runs to the sea,
And past the House of Spring.

The folk go down it unafraid;
The still roofs rise before;
When you were lad and I was maid,
Wide open stood the door.

Now, other children crowd the stair,
And hunt from room to room;
Outside, under the hawthorn fair,
We pluck the thorny bloom.

Out in the quiet road we stand,
Shut in from wharf and mart,
The old wind blowing up the land,
The old thoughts at our heart.

Lizette Woodworth Reese [1856–1935]

THE TRIUMPH OF FORGOTTEN THINGS

There is a pity in forgotten things,
Banished the heart they can no longer fill,
Since restless Fancy, spreading swallow wings,
Must seek new pleasures still!

There is a patience, too, in things forgot;
They wait – they find the portal long unused;
And knocking there, it shall refuse them not, –
Nor aught shall be refused!

Ah, yes! though we, unheeding years on years,
In alien pledges spend the heart's estate,
They bide some blessed moment of quick tears –
Some moment without date –

Some gleam on flower, or leaf, or beaded dew,
Some tremble at the ear of memoried sound
Of mother-song, – they seize the slender clew, –
The old loves gather round!

When that which lured us once now lureth not,
But the tired hands their garnered dross let fall,
This is the triumph of the things forgot –
To hear the tired heart call!

And they are with us at Life's farthest reach,
A light when into shadow all else dips,
As, in the stranger's land, their native speech
Returns to dying lips!

Edith M. Thomas [1854–1925]

IN THE TWILIGHT

Men say the sullen instrument,
That, from the Master's bow,
With pangs of joy or woe,
Feels music's soul through every fibre sent,
Whispers the ravished strings
More than he knew or meant;
Old summers in its memory glow;
The secrets of the wind it sings;
It hears the April-loosened springs;
And mixes with its mood
All it dreamed when it stood
In the murmurous pine-wood
Long ago!

The magical moonlight then
Steeped every bough and cone;
The roar of the brook in the glen
Came dim from the distance blown;
The wind through its glooms sang low,
And it swayed to and fro,
With delight as it stood,
In the wonderful wood,
Long ago!

O my life, have we not had seasons
That only said, Live and rejoice?
That asked not for causes and reasons,
But made us all feeling and voice?
When we went with the winds in their blowing,
When Nature and we were peers,
And we seemed to share in the flowing
Of the inexhaustible years?
Have we not from the earth drawn juices
Too fine for earth's sordid uses?
Have I heard, have I seen
All I feel, all I know?
Doth my heart overween?
Or could it have been
Long ago?

Sometimes a breath floats by me,
An odor from Dreamland sent,
That makes the ghost seem nigh me
Of a splendor that came and went,
Of a life lived somewhere, I know not
In what diviner sphere,

Of memories that stay not and go not,
Like music heard once by an ear
That cannot forget or reclaim it,
A something so shy, it would shame it
To make it a show,
A something too vague, could I name it,
For others to know,
As if I had lived it or dreamed it,
As if I had acted or schemed it,
Long ago!

And yet, could I live it over,

This life that stirs in my brain,
Could I be both maiden and lover,
Moon and tide, bee and clover,
As I seem to have been, once again,
Could I but speak it and show it,
This pleasure more sharp than pain,
That baffles and lures me so,
The world should once more have a poet,
Such as it had
In the ages glad,
Long ago!

James Russell Lowell [1819–1891]

AN IMMORALITY

Sing we for love and idleness,
Naught else is worth the having.
Though I have been in many a land,
There is naught else in living.

And I would rather have my sweet,
Though rose-leaves die of grieving,
Than do high deeds in Hungary
To pass all men's believing.

Ezra Pound [1885–

THREE SEASONS

"A cup for hope!" she said,
In springtime ere the bloom was old:
The crimson wine was poor and cold
By her mouth's richer red.

"A cup for love!" how low,
How soft the words; and all the while
Her blush was rippling with a smile
Like summer after snow.

"A cup for memory!"
Cold cup that one must drain alone:
While autumn winds are up and moan
Across the barren sea.

Hope, memory, love:
Hope for fair morn, and love for day,
And memory for the evening gray
And solitary dove.

Christina Georgina Rossetti [1830–1894]

THE OLD FAMILIAR FACES

I have had playmates, I have had companions,
In my days of childhood, in my joyful schooldays, –
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have been laughing, I have been carousing,
Drinking late, sitting late, with my bosom cronies, –
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I loved a Love once, fairest among women:
Closed are her doors on me, I must not see her, –
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have a friend, a kinder friend has no man:
Like an ingrate, I left my friend abruptly;
Left him, to muse on the old familiar faces.

Ghost-like, I paced round the haunts of my childhood.
Earth seemed a desert I was bound to traverse,
Seeking to find the old familiar faces.

Friend of my bosom, thou more than a brother,
Why wert not thou born in my father's dwelling?
So might we talk of the old familiar faces –

How some they have died, and some they have left me,
And some are taken from me; all are departed, –
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

Charles Lamb [1775–1834]

THE LIGHT OF OTHER DAYS

Oft in the stilly night,
Ere Slumber's chain hath bound me,
Fond memory brings the light
Of other days around me:
The smiles, the tears,
Of boyhood's years,
The words of love then spoken;
The eyes that shone,
Now dimmed and gone,
The cheerful hearts now broken!
Thus in the stilly night,
Ere Slumber's chain hath bound me,
Sad Memory brings the light
Of other days around me.

When I remember all
The friends, so linked together,
I've seen around me fall,
Like leaves in wintry weather,
I feel like one
Who treads alone
Some banquet-hall deserted,
Whose lights are fled,
Whose garlands dead,
And all but he departed!
Thus in the stilly night,
Ere Slumber's chain hath bound me,
Sad Memory brings the light
Of other days around me.

Thomas Moore [1779–1852]

"TEARS, IDLE TEARS"

From "The Princess"

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remembered kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more!

Alfred Tennyson [1809–1892]

THE PET NAME

". . . the name
Which from their lips seemed a caress."

– Miss Milford's "Dramatic Scenes"

I have a name, a little name,
Uncadenced for the ear,
Unhonored by ancestral claim,
Unsanctified by prayer and psalm
The solemn font anear.

It never did to pages wove
For gay romance belong;
It never dedicate did move
As "Sacharissa" unto love,
"Orinda" unto song.

Though I write books, it will be read
Upon the leaves of none,
And afterward, when I am dead,
Will ne'er be graved for sight or tread,
Across my funeral–stone.

This name, whoever chance to call,
Perhaps your smile may win:
Nay, do not smile! mine eyelids fall
Over mine eyes and feel withal
The sudden tears within.

Is there a leaf, that greenly grows
Where summer meadows bloom,
But gathereth the winter snows,
And changeth to the hue of those,
If lasting till they come?

Is there a word, or jest, or game,
But time incrusteth round
With sad associate thoughts the same?
And so to me my very name
Assumes a mournful sound.

My brother gave that name to me
When we were children twain,
When names acquired baptismally

Were hard to utter, as to see
That life had any pain.

No shade was on us then, save one
Of chestnuts from the hill;
And through the word our laugh did run
As part thereof: the mirth being done,
He calls me by it still.

Nay, do not smile! I hear in it
What none of you can hear, –
The talk upon the willow seat,
The bird and wind that did repeat
Around, our human cheer.

I hear the birthday's noisy bliss
My sisters' woodland glee,
My father's praise I did not miss
When stooping down, he cared to kiss
The poet at his knee, –

And voices which, to name me, aye
Their tenderest tones were keeping, –
To some I nevermore can say
An answer till God wipes away
In heaven these drops of weeping.

My name to me a sadness wears:
No murmurs cross my mind –
Now God be thanked for these thick tears,
Which show, of those departed years,
Sweet memories left behind.

Now God be thanked for years enwrought
With love which softens yet:
Now God be thanked for every thought
Which is so tender it has caught
Earth's guerdon of regret.

Earth saddens, never shall remove
Affections purely given;
And e'en that mortal grief shall prove
The immortality of love,
And heighten it with Heaven.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning [1806–1861]

THREESCORE AND TEN

Who reach their threescore years and ten,
As I have mine, without a sigh,
Are either more or less than men –
Not such am I.

I am not of them; life to me
Has been a strange, bewildering dream,
Wherein I knew not things that be
From things that seem.

I thought, I hoped, I knew one thing,
And had one gift, when I was young –
The impulse and the power to sing,
And so I sung.

To have a place in the high choir
Of poets, and deserve the same –
What more could mortal man desire
Than poet's fame?

I sought it long, but never found;
The choir so full was and so strong
The jubilant voices there, they drowned
My simple song.

Men would not hear me then, and now
I care not, I accept my fate,
When white hairs thatch the furrowed brow
Crowns come too late!

The best of life went long ago
From me; it was not much at best;
Only the love that young hearts know,
The dear unrest.

Back on my past, through gathering tears,
Once more I cast my eyes, and see
Bright shapes that in my better years
Surrounded me!

They left me here, they left me there,
Went down dark pathways, one by one –
The wise, the great, the young, the fair;
But I went on.

And I go on! And bad or good,

The old allotted years of men
I have endured as best I could,
Threescore and ten!

Richard Henry Stoddard [1825–1903]

RAIN ON THE ROOF

When the humid shadows hover
Over all the starry spheres,
And the melancholy darkness
Gently weeps in rainy tears,
What a bliss to press the pillow
Of a cottage-chamber bed,
And to listen to the patter
Of the soft rain overhead!

Every tinkle on the shingles
Has an echo in the heart;
And a thousand dreamy fancies
Into busy being start,
And a thousand recollections
Weave their air-threads into woof,
As I listen to the patter
Of the rain upon the roof.

Now in memory comes my mother,
As she used, in years ago,
To regard the darling dreamers
Ere she left them till the dawn;
And I feel her fond look on me,
As I list to this refrain
Which is played upon the shingles
By the patter of the rain.

Then my little seraph sister,
With her wings and waving hair,
And her star-eyed cherub brother –
A serene angelic pair –
Glide around my wakeful pillow,
With their praise or mild reproof,
As I listen to the murmur
Of the soft rain on the roof.

And another comes, to thrill me
With her eyes' delicious blue;
And I mind not, musing on her,
That her heart was all untrue:
I remember but to love her
With a passion kin to pain,
And my heart's quick pulses vibrate
To the patter of the rain.

Art hath naught of tone or cadence

That can work with such a spell
In the soul's mysterious fountains,
Whence the tears of rapture well,
As that melody of nature,
That subdued, subduing strain
Which is played upon the shingles
By the patter of the rain.

Coates Kinney [1826–1904]

ALONE BY THE HEARTH

Here, in my snug little fire-lit chamber,
Sit I alone:
And, as I gaze in the coals, I remember
Days long ago.
Saddening it is when the night has descended,
Thus to sit here,
Pensively musing on episodes ended
Many a year.

Still in my visions a golden-haired glory
Flits to and fro;
She whom I loved – but 'tis just the old story:
Dead, long ago.
'Tis but a wraith of love; yet I linger
(Thus passion errs),
Foolishly kissing the ring on my finger –
Once it was hers.

Nothing has changed since her spirit departed,
Here, in this room
Save I, who, weary, and half broken-hearted,
Sit in the gloom.
Loud 'gainst the window the winter rain dashes,
Dreary and cold;
Over the floor the red fire-light flashes
Just as of old.

Just as of old – but the embers are scattered,
Whose ruddy blaze
Flashed o'er the floor where the fairy feet pattered
In other days!
Then, her dear voice, like a silver chime ringing,
Melted away;
Often these walls have re-echoed her singing,
Now hushed for aye!

Why should love bring naught but sorrow, I wonder?
Everything dies!
Time and death, sooner or later, must sunder
Holiest ties.
Years have rolled by; I am wiser and older –
Wiser, but yet
Not till my heart and its feelings grow colder,
Can I forget.

So, in my snug little fire-lit chamber,

Sit I alone;
And, as I gaze in the coals, I remember
Days long ago!

George Arnold [1834–1865]

THE OLD MAN DREAMS

Oh for one hour of youthful joy!
Give back my twentieth spring!
I'd rather laugh, a bright-haired boy,
Than reign, a gray-beard king.

Off with the spoils of wrinkled age!
Away with Learning's crown!
Tear out life's Wisdom-written page,
And dash its trophies down!

One moment let my life-blood stream
From boyhood's fount of flame!
Give me one giddy, reeling dream
Of life all love and fame!

My listening angel heard the prayer,
And, calmly smiling, said,
"If I but touch thy silvered hair,
Thy hasty wish hath sped.

"But is there nothing in thy track
To bid thee fondly stay,
While the swift seasons hurry back
To find the wished-for day?"

"Ah, truest soul of womankind!
Without thee what were life?
One bliss I cannot leave behind:
I'll take – my – precious – wife!"

The angel took a sapphire pen
And wrote in rainbow dew,
The man would be a boy again,
And be a husband, too!

"And is there nothing yet unsaid,
Before the change appears?
Remember, all their gifts have fled
With those dissolving years."

"Why, yes;" for memory would recall
My fond paternal joys;
"I could not bear to leave them all –
I'll take – my – girl – and – boys."

The smiling angel dropped his pen, –

"Why, this will never do;
The man would be a boy again,
And be a father, too!"

And so I laughed, – my laughter woke
The household with its noise, –
And wrote my dream, when morning broke,
To please the gray-haired boys.

Oliver Wendell Holmes [1809–1894]

THE GARRET

After Beranger

With pensive eyes the little room I view,
Where, in my youth, I weathered it so long;
With a wild mistress, a stanch friend or two,
And a light heart still breaking into song:
Making a mock of life, and all its cares,
Rich in the glory of my rising sun,
Lightly I vaulted up four pair of stairs,
In the brave days when I was twenty-one.

Yes; 'tis a garret – let him know't who will –
There was my bed – full hard it was and small;
My table there – and I decipher still
Half a lame couplet charcoaled on the wall.
Ye joys, that Time hath swept with him away,
Come to mine eyes, ye dreams of love and fun;
For you I pawned my watch how many a day,
In the brave days when I was twenty-one.

And see my little Jessy, first of all;
She comes with pouting lips and sparkling eyes:
Behold, how roguishly she pins her shawl
Across the narrow casement, curtain-wise;
Now by the bed her petticoat glides down,
And when did woman look the worse in none?

I have heard since who paid for many a gown,
In the brave days when I was twenty-one.

One jolly evening, when my friends and I
Made happy music with our songs and cheers,
A shout of triumph mounted up thus high,
And distant cannon opened on our ears:
We rise, – we join in the triumphant strain, –
Napoleon conquers – Austerlitz is won –
Tyrants shall never tread us down again,
In the brave days when I was twenty-one.

Let us begone – the place is sad and strange –
How far, far off, these happy times appear;
All that I have to live I'd gladly change
For one such month as I have wasted here –
To draw long dreams of beauty, love, and power,
From founts of hope that never will outrun,
And drink all life's quintessence in an hour,
Give me the days when I was twenty-one!

William Makepeace Thackeray [1811–1863]

AULD LANG SYNE

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to min'?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And days o' lang syne?

For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
For auld lang syne.

We twa hae rin about the braes,
And pu'd the gowans fine;
But we've wandered monie a weary fit
Sin' auld lang syne.

We twa hae paidl't i' the burn,
Frae mornin' sun till dine;
But seas between us braid hae roared
Sin' auld lang syne.

And here's a hand, my trusty fiere,
And gie's a hand o' thine;
And we'll tak a right guid willie-waught
For auld lang syne.

And surely ye'll be your pint-stowp,
And surely I'll be mine,
And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
For auld lang syne!

Robert Burns [1759–1796]

ROCK ME TO SLEEP

Backward, turn backward, O Time, in your flight,
Make me a child again, just for to-night!
Mother, come back from the echoless shore,
Take me again to your heart as of yore;
Kiss from my forehead the furrows of care,
Smooth the few silver threads out of my hair;
Over my slumbers your loving watch keep; –
Rock me to sleep, mother, – rock me to sleep!

Backward, flow backward, O tide of the years!
I am so weary of toil and of tears, –
Toil without recompense, tears all in vain, –
Take them, and give me my childhood again!
I have grown weary of dust and decay, –
Weary of flinging my soul-wealth away;
Weary of sowing for others to reap; –
Rock me to sleep, mother, – rock me to sleep!

Tired of the hollow, the base, the untrue,
Mother, O mother, my heart calls for you!
Many a summer the grass has grown green,
Blossomed and faded, our faces between:
Yet, with strong yearning and passionate pain,
Long I to-night for your presence again.
Come from the silence so long and so deep; –
Rock me to sleep, mother, – rock me to sleep!

Over my heart, in the days that are flown,
No love like mother-love ever has shone;
No other worship abides and endures, –
Faithful, unselfish, and patient, like yours:
None like a mother can charm away pain
From the sick soul and the world-weary brain.
Slumber's soft calms o'er my heavy lids creep; –
Rock me to sleep, mother, – rock me to sleep!

Come, let your brown hair, just lighted with gold.
Fall on your shoulders again as of old;
Let it drop over my forehead to-night,
Shading my faint eyes away from the light;
For with its sunny-edged shadows once more
Haply will throng the sweet visions of yore;
Lovingly, softly, its bright billows sweep; –
Rock me to sleep, mother, – rock me to sleep!

Mother, dear mother, the years have been long

Since I last listened your lullaby song:
Sing, then, and unto my soul it shall seem
Womanhood's years have been only a dream.
Clasped to your heart in a loving embrace,
With your light lashes just sweeping my face,
Never hereafter to wake or to weep; –
Rock me to sleep, mother, – rock me to sleep!

Elizabeth Akers [1832–1911]

THE BUCKET

How dear to this heart are the scenes of my childhood,
When fond recollection presents them to view!
The orchard, the meadow, the deep-tangled wild-wood,
And every loved spot which my infancy knew!
The wide-spreading pond, and the mill that stood by it,
The bridge, and the rock where the cataract fell,
The cot of my father, the dairy-house nigh it,
And e'en the rude bucket that hung in the well –
The old oaken bucket, the iron-bound bucket,
The moss-covered bucket which hung in the well.

That moss-covered vessel I hailed as a treasure,
For often at noon, when returned from the field,
I found it the source of an exquisite pleasure,
The purest and sweetest that nature can yield.
How ardent I seized it, with hands that were glowing,
And quick to the white-pebbled bottom it fell;
Then soon, with the emblem of truth overflowing,
And dripping with coolness, it rose from the well –
The old oaken bucket, the iron-bound bucket,
The moss-covered bucket arose from the well.

How sweet from the green mossy brim to receive it,
As poised on the curb it inclined to my lips!
Not a full blushing goblet would tempt me to leave it,
The brightest that beauty or revelry sips.
And now, far removed from the loved habitation,
The tear of regret will intrusively swell,
As fancy reverts to my father's plantation,
And sighs for the bucket that hangs in the well –
The old oaken bucket, the iron-bound bucket,
The moss-covered bucket that hangs in the well!

Samuel Woodworth [1785–1842]

THE GRAPE-VINE SWING

Lithe and long as the serpent train,
Springing and clinging from tree to tree,
Now darting upward, now down again,
With a twist and a twirl that are strange to see;
Never took serpent a deadlier hold,
Never the cougar a wilder spring,
Strangling the oak with the boa's fold,
Spanning the beach with the condor's wing.

Yet no foe that we fear to seek, –
The boy leaps wild to thy rude embrace;
Thy bulging arms bear as soft a cheek
As ever on lover's breast found place;
On thy waving train is a playful hold
Thou shalt never to lighter grasp persuade;
While a maiden sits in thy drooping fold,
And swings and sings in the noonday shade!

O giant strange of our Southern woods!
I dream of thee still in the well-known spot,
Though our vessel strains o'er the ocean floods,
And the Northern forest beholds thee not;
I think of thee still with a sweet regret,
As the cordage yields to my playful grasp, –
Dost thou spring and cling in our woodlands yet?
Does the maiden still swing in thy giant clasp?

William Gilmore Simms [1806–1870]

THE OLD SWIMMIN'-HOLE

Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! whare the crick so still and deep
Looked like a baby-river that was laying half asleep,
And the gurgle of the worter round the drift jest below
Sounded like the laugh of something we onc't ust to know
Before we could remember anything but the eyes
Of the angels lookin' out as we left Paradise;
But the merry days of youth is beyond our controle,
And it's hard to part ferever with the old swimmin'-hole.

Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! In the happy days of yore,
When I ust to lean above it on the old sickamore,
Oh! it showed me a face in its warm sunny tide
That gazed back at me so gay and glorified,
It made me love myself as I leaped to caress
My shadder smilin' up at me with sich tenderness.
But them days is past and gone, and old Time's tuck his toll
From the old man come back to the old swimmin'-hole.

Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! In the long, lazy days
When the hum-drum of school made so many run-a-ways,
How pleasant was the journey down the old dusty lane,
Whare the tracks of our bare feet was all printed so plane
You could tell by the dent of the heel and the sole
They was lots o' fun on hand at the old swimmin'-hole.
But the lost joys is past! Let your tears in sorrow roll
Like the rain that ust to dapple up the old swimmin'-hole.

Thare the bulrushes growed, and the cattails so tall,
And the sunshine and shadder fell over it all;
And it mottled the worter with amber and gold
Tel the glad lilies rocked in the ripples that rolled;
And the snake-feeder's four gauzy wings fluttered by
Like the ghost of a daisy dropped out of the sky,
Or a wownded apple-blossom in the breeze's controle
As it cut acrost some orchurd to'rds the old swimmin'-hole.

Oh! the old swimmin'-hole! When I last saw the place,
The scenes was all changed, like the change in my face;
The bridge of the railroad now crosses the spot
Whare the old divin'-log lays sunk and fergot.
And I stray down the banks whare the trees ust to be –
But never again will theyr shade shelter me!
And I wish in my sorrow I could strip to the soul,
And dive off in my grave like the old swimmin'-hole.

James Whitcomb Riley [1849–1916]

FORTY YEARS AGO

I've wandered to the village, Tom, I've sat beneath the tree,
Upon the schoolhouse playground, that sheltered you and me;
But none were there to greet me, Tom; and few were left to know,
Who played with us upon that green some forty years ago.

The grass is just as green, Tom; barefooted boys at play
Were sporting, just as we did then, with spirits just as gay.
But the "master" sleeps upon the hill, which, coated o'er with snow,
Afforded us a sliding-place some forty years ago.

The old schoolhouse is altered some; the benches are replaced
By new ones, very like the same our jackknives once defaced;
But the same old bricks are in the wall, the bell swings to and fro;
Its music's just the same, dear Tom, 'twas forty years ago.

The boys were playing some old game, beneath that same old tree;
I have forgot the name just now – you've played the same with me,
On that same spot; 'twas played with knives, by throwing so and so;
The loser had a task to do, there, forty years ago.

The river's running just as still; the willows on its side
Are larger than they were, Tom; the stream appears less wide;
But the grape-vine swing is ruined now, where once we played the beau,
And swung our sweethearts – pretty girls – just forty years ago.

The spring that bubbled 'neath the hill, close by the spreading beech,
Is very low – 'twas then so high that we could scarcely reach;
And, kneeling down to get a drink, dear Tom, I started so,
To see how sadly I am changed since forty years ago.

Near by that spring, upon an elm, you know I cut your name,
Your sweetheart's just beneath it, Tom, and you did mine the same;
Some heartless wretch has peeled the bark, 'twas dying sure but slow,
Just as she died, whose name you cut, some forty years ago.

My lids have long been dry, Tom, but tears came to my eyes;
I thought of her I loved so well, those early broken ties;
I visited the old churchyard, and took some flowers to strow
Upon the graves of those we loved some forty years ago.

Some are in the churchyard laid, some sleep beneath the sea,
And none are left of our old class, excepting you and me;
But when our time shall come, Tom, and we are called to go,
I hope we'll meet with those we loved some forty years ago.

Unknown

The Home Book of Verse, V1

[Sometimes called "Twenty Years Ago."

Claimed for A. J. Gault (1818–1903) by his family]

BEN BOLT

Don't you remember sweet Alice, Ben Bolt, –
Sweet Alice whose hair was so Brown,
Who wept with delight when you gave her a smile,
And trembled with fear at your frown?
In the old churchyard in the valley, Ben Bolt,
In a corner obscure and alone,
They have fitted a slab of the granite so gray,
And Alice lies under the stone.

Under the hickory tree, Ben Bolt,
Which stood at the foot of the hill,
Together we've lain in the noonday shade,
And listened to Appleton's mill.
The mill-wheel has fallen to pieces, Ben Bolt,
The rafters have tumbled in,
And a quiet which crawls round the walls as you gaze
Has followed the olden din.

Do you mind of the cabin of logs, Ben Bolt.
At the edge of the pathless wood,
And the button-ball tree with its motley limbs,
Which nigh by the doorstep stood?
The cabin to ruin has gone, Ben Bolt,
The tree you would seek for in vain;
And where once the lords of the forest waved
Are grass and the golden grain.

And don't you remember the school, Ben Bolt,
With the master so cruel and grim,
And the shaded nook in the running brook
Where the children went to swim?
Grass grows on the master's grave, Ben Bolt,
The spring of the brook is dry,
And of all the boys who were schoolmates then
There are only you and I.

There is change in the things I loved, Ben Bolt,
They have changed from the old to the new;
But I feel in the deeps of my spirit the truth,
There never was change in you.
Twelvemonths twenty have passed, Ben Bolt,
Since first we were friends – yet I hail
Your presence a blessing, your friendship a truth,
Ben Bolt of the salt-sea gale.

Thomas Dunn English [1819–1902]

"BREAK, BREAK, BREAK"

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O, well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O, well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on,
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

Alfred Tennyson [1809–1892]