



BALLADS.

For

LITTLE FOLK.

BY

ALICE AND PHOEBE CARY.



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GRISELDA GOOSE.

[See p. 104.]

BALLADS

FOR

LITTLE FOLK.

BY

ALICE AND PHŒBE CARY.

EDITED BY

MARY CLEMMER AMES.



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P R E F A C E.

DEAR LITTLE FOLK:—

YOU lost two of the best friends you ever had when Alice and Phœbe Cary passed from earth. Many men and women grow away from their childhood and lose their sympathy with children. This was never true of these dear friends of yours. Although neither had any child of her own, both loved all children. Nothing could interest a child that did not interest them. You will be sure of this when you have read all the loving rhymes which they have written to you on the following pages. In these you will find that they are interested in all your work, in all your play, in your thoughts, in your sorrows, and in your joys, for nobody could feel more than they did that the woe or happiness of a child is as real and as much to be respected as that of any grown person. Alice and Phœbe Cary were born in a farmhouse in the West, amid bees, birds, and butterflies,

flowers and cattle, as you will discover before you have read many pages. They paint the old homestead over and over for your happy eyes. They picture their father and mother, their brothers and sisters, their playmates human and dumb; the butterflies, the bees, the bugs, the horses and the cows which they loved so well. You share this love with these dear friends, and how near it brings your hearts and theirs together, although in other respects nearly a whole lifetime of suffering divided them from you, who are so young, so fresh, so fair! God keep you so, from all the evil and sorrow of earth, dear little girls and boys!

There never was a child, whether born in a farmhouse by the roadside, or in a great high house in a crowded street, who did not love natural things, birds, and bees, and bugs, horses and cows; and the only thing on earth one can have against you, boys, is that sometimes you do not listen to that good kind heart of yours, which loves these creatures, but to the hard cruel one which seems to jump up once in a while in every boy's breast and makes him snare birds, kill bugs, and be cruel to cats and to every dumb thing.

Your friends, Alice and Phœbe Cary, knew all about

this shady side of you, as you will soon see. They did not love you any less for it. But they loved you so well that they often prayed you to guard against it and to rise above it, to your own good, sweet, noblest little selves. Thus while they pictured for you everything that they loved best, each picture holds a little lesson to you that will help you to be a stronger and better boy or girl. They loved you so truly that their supreme desire was not only to make you happy, but to help every one of you to grow up to be a true and noble man or woman. Many of their tender lessons to you on these pages you will carry in your hearts as long as you live. That it may be as delightful to you to read them as it has been to me to arrange them for you, is the sincere wish, dear children, of

Your affectionate friend,

MARY CLEMMER AMES.





CONTENTS.



BALLADS BY ALICE CARY.

LITTLE CHILDREN	1
A CHRISTMAS STORY	2
NOVEMBER	10
MAKE-BELIEVE	12
A NUT HARD TO CRACK	21
HIDE AND SEEK	23
THREE BUGS	27
WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO TURN UP	29
SUPPOSE	32
A GOOD RULE	33
TO MOTHER FAIRIE	36
BARBARA BLUE	38
TAKE CARE	42
THE GRATEFUL SWAN	44
A SHORT SERMON	50
STORY OF A BLACKBIRD	51
FAIRY-FOLK	55
BURIED GOLD	57
RECEIPT FOR AN APPETITE	61
THE PIG AND THE HEN	62
SPIDER AND FLY	65
A LESSON OF MERCY	67
THE FLOWER SPIDER	70
DAN AND DIMPLE AND HOW THEY QUARRELED	72
TO A HONEY-BEE	74
AT THE TAVERN	76
WHAT A BIRD TAUGHT	79

OLD MAXIMS	81
PETER GREY	84
A SERMON FOR YOUNG FOLKS	86
TELLING FORTUNES	88
THE WISE FAIRY	90
A CHILD'S WISDOM	93

BALLADS BY PHŒBE CARY.

TO THE CHILDREN	101
GRISELDA GOOSE	104
THE ROBIN'S NEST	119
RAIN AND SUNSHINE	124
BABY'S RING	126
DON'T GIVE UP	127
THE GOOD LITTLE SISIER	128
NOW	133
THE CHICKEN'S MISTAKE	134
EFFIE'S REASONS	136
FEATHERS	139
THE PRAIRIE ON FIRE	143
DAPPLEDUN	146
SUPPOSE!	148
A LEGEND OF THE NORTHLAND	150
EASY LESSONS	154
OBEDIENCE	157
THE CROW'S CHILDREN	158
HIVES AND HOMES	161
NORA'S CHARM	165
THEY DIDN'T THINK	169
AJAX	172
KEEP A STIFF UPPER LIP	174
WHAT THE FROGS SING	176
THE HUNCHBACK	181
THE ENVIOUS WREN	183
THE HAPPY LITTLE WIFE	185



BALLADS FOR LITTLE FOLK.

BY ALICE CARY.



LITTLE CHILDREN.

BLESSINGS, blessings on the beds
Whose white pillows softly bear,
Rows of little shining heads
That have never known a care.

Pity for the heart that bleeds
In the homestead desolate
Where no little troubling needs
Make the weary working wait.

Safely, safely to the fold
Bring them wheresoe'er they be,
Thou, who saidst of them, of old,
"Suffer them to come to me."



A CHRISTMAS STORY.

TO BE READ BY ALL WHO DEAL HARDLY WITH YOUNG CHILDREN.

PART I.

Up, Gregory! the cloudy east
Is bright with the break o' the day;
'Tis time to yoke our cattle, and time
To eat our crust and away.
Up, out o' your bed! for the rosy red
Will soon be growing gray.

Ay, straight to your feet, my lazy lad,
And button your jacket on —
Already neighbor Joe is afield,
And so is our neighbor John —
The golden light is turning to white,
And 'tis time that we were gone!

Nay, leave your shoes hung high and dry —
Do you fear a little sleet?
Your mother to-day is not by half
So dainty with her feet,
And I'll warrant you she hadn't a shoe
At your age upon her feet!

What! shiv'ring on an April day?
Why this is prëtty news!
The frosts before an hour will all
Be melted into dews,
And Christmas week will do, I think,
To talk about your shoes!

Waiting to brew another cup
Of porridge? sure you're mad —
One cup at your age, Gregory,
And precious small, I had.
We cannot bake the Christmas cake
At such a rate, my lad!

Out, out at once! and on with the yoke,
Your feet will never freeze!
The sun before we have done a stroke
Will be in the tops o' the trees.
A-Christmas day you may eat and play
As much as ever you please!

So out of the house, and into the sleet,
With his jacket open wide,
Went pale and patient Gregory —
All present joy denied —
And yoked his team like one in a dream,
Hungry and sleepy-eyed.

PART II.

It seemed to our little harvester
He could hear the shadows creep ;
For the scythe lay idle in the grass,
And the reaper had ceased to reap.
'Twas the burning noon of the leafy June,
And the birds were all asleep.

And he seemed to rather see than hear
The wind through the long leaves draw,
As he sat and notched the stops along
His pipe of hollow straw.
On Christmas day he had planned to play
His tune without a flaw.

Upon his sleeve the spider's web
Hung loose like points of lace,
And he looked like a picture painted there,
He was so full of grace.
For his cheeks they shone as if there had blown
Fresh roses in his face.

Ah, never on his lady's arm
A lover's hand was laid
With touches soft as his upon
The flute that he had made,
As he bent his ear and watched to hear
The sweet, low tune he played.

But all at once from out his cheek
The light o' the roses fled —
He had heard a coming step that crushed
The daisies 'neath its tread.
O, happiness! thou art held by less
Than the spider's tiniest thread!

A moment, and the old harsh call
Had broken his silver tune,
And with his sickle all as bright
And bent as the early moon,
He cut his way through the thick set hay
In the burning heat o' the June.

As one who by a river stands,
Weary and worn and sad,
And sees the flowers the other side—
So was it with the lad.
There was Christmas light in his dream at night,
But a dream was all he had.

Work, work in the light o' th' rosy morns,
Work, work, in the dusky eves ;
For now they must plough, and now they must plant,
And now they must bind the sheaves.
And far away was the holiday
All under the Christmas leaves.

For still it brought the same old cry,
If he would rest or play,

Some other week, or month, or year,
But not now — not to-day !
Nor feast, nor flower, for th' passing hour,
But all for the far away.

PART III.



Now Christmas came, and Gregory
With the dawn was broad awake ;
But there was the crumple cow to milk,
And there was the cheese to make ;
And so it was noon ere he went to the town
To buy the Christmas cake.

“ You’ll leave your warm, new coat at home,
And keep it fresh and bright
To wear,” the careful old man said,
“ When you come back to-night.”
“ Ay,” answered the lad, for his heart was glad,
And he whistled out o’ their sight.

The frugal couple sat by the fire
And talked the hours away,

Turning over the years like leaves
To the friends of their wedding day —
Saying who was wed, and who was dead,
And who was growing gray.

And so at last the day went by,
As, somehow, all days will ;
And when the evening winds began
To blow up wild and shrill,
They looked to see if their Gregory
Were coming across the hill.

They saw the snow-cloud on the sky,
With its rough and ragged edge,
And thought of the river running high,
And thought of the broken bridge ;
But they did not see their Gregory
Keeping his morning's pledge !

The old wife rose, her fear to hide,
And set the house aright,
But oft she paused at the window side,
And looked out on the night.
The candles fine, they were all a-shine,
But they could not make it light.

The very clock ticked mournfully,
And the cricket was not glad,
And to the old folks sitting alone,
The time was, Oh ! so sad ;

For the Christmas light, it lacked that night
The cheeks of their little lad.

The winds and the woods fall wrestling now,
And they cry, as the storm draws near,
“If Gregory were but home alive,
He should not work all this year!”
For they saw him dead in the river's bed,
Through the surges of their fear.

Of ghosts that walk o' nights they tell —
A sorry Christmas theme —
And of signs and tokens in the air,
And of many a warning dream,
Till the bough at the pane through th' sleet and rain
Drags like a corpse in a stream.

There was the warm new coat unworn,
And the flute of straw unplayed;
And these were dreadfuller than ghosts
To make their souls afraid,
As the years that were gone came one by one,
And their slights before them laid.

The Easter days and the Christmas days
Bereft of their sweet employ,
And working and waiting through them all
Their little pale-eyed boy,
Looking away to the holiday
That should bring the promised joy.

“God’s mercy on us!” cried they both,
 “ We have been so blind and deaf ;
And justly are our gray heads bowed
 To the very grave with grief.”
But hark! is’t the rain that taps at the pane,
 Or the fluttering, falling leaf?

Nay, fluttering leaf, nor snow, nor rain,
 However hard they strive,
Can make a sound so sweet and soft,
 Like a bee’s wing in the hive.
Joy! joy! O joy! it is their boy!
 Safe, home, in their arms alive!

Ah, never was there pair so rich
 As they that night, I trow,
And never a lad in all the world
 With a merrier pipe to blow,
Nor Christmas light that shone so bright
 At midnight on the snow.





NOVEMBER.

THE leaves are fading and falling,
The winds are rough and wild,
The birds have ceased their calling,
But let me tell you, my child,

Though day by day, as it closes,
Doth darker and colder grow,
The roots of the bright red roses
Will keep alive in the snow.

And when the Winter is over,
The boughs will get new leaves,
The quail come back to the clover,
And the swallow back to the eaves.

The robin will wear on his bosom
A vest that is bright and new,
And the loveliest way-side blossom
Will shine with the sun and dew.

The leaves to-day are whirling,
The brooks are all dry and dumb,
But let me tell you, my darling,
The Spring will be sure to come.

There must be rough, cold weather,
And winds and rains so wild ;
Not all good things together
Come to us here, my child.

So, when some dear joy loses
Its beauteous summer glow,
Think how the roots of the roses
Are kept alive in the snow.





MAKE-BELIEVE.

ALL upon a summer day,
Seven children, girls and boys,
Raking in the meadow hay,
Waked the echoes with their noise.

You must know them by their names —
Fanny Field and Mary,
Benjamin and Susan James,
Joe and John M'Clary.

Then a child, so very small,
She was only come for play —
Little Miss Matilda May,
And you have them, one and all.

'Twas a pretty sight to see —
Seven girls and boys together
Raking in the summer weather,
Merry as they well could be!

But one lad that we must own
Many a lad has represented,
Doing well, was not contented
To let well enough alone!

This was Master Benny James,
Brother, you will see, to Sue,
If you glance along the names
As I set them down for you.

Out he spoke — this Benjamin —
Standing with his lazy back
Close against a fragrant stack.
Out and up he spoke, and then
Called with much ado and noise
All the seven girls and boys
From their raking in the hay —
Fanny Field and Mary,
Sister Sue and Tilly May,
Joe and John M'Clary.

Two by two, and one by one
Turned upon their work their backs,
And with skip, and hop, and run
In and out among the stacks,

Came with faces flushed and red
As the flowers along the glen,
And began to question Ben,
Who made answer back, and said —
Speaking out so very loud —
Holding up his head so proud,
As he leaned his lazy back
Close against the fragrant stack ;

Make-believe.

- “ Listen will you, girls and boys !
This is what I have to say —
I've invented a new play ! ”
Then they cried with merry noise —
“ Tell us all about it, Ben ! ”
And he answered — “ First of all,
All we boys, or large or small,
Must pretend that we are men ! ”
- “ And you girls, Fan, Sue, and Molly,
Must pretend that you're birds,
And must chirp and sing your words —
Never was there play so jolly ! ”
- “ I'm to be called Captain Gray,
And, of course, the rest of you
All must do as I shall say.”
Here he called his sister Sue,
Telling her she must be blue,
And must answer to her name
When the call of Bluebird came.
- Fanny Field must be a Jay,
And the rest — no matter what —
Anything that they were not !
Mary might be Tilly May,
And Matilda, as for her,
She might be a Grasshopper !
- All cried out, “ Oh, what a play ! ”
Fanny Field and Mary,

Susy James and Tilly May,
Joe and John M'Clary.

Here Ben said he was not Ben
Any more, but Captain Gray!
And gave order first — "My men,
Forward! march! and rake the hay!"

Then he told his sister Sue
She must go and do the same,
But, forgetting she was blue,
Called her by her proper name.

Loud enough laughed Susan then,
And declared she would not say
Any longer Captain Gray,
But would only call him Ben!

This was such a dreadful falling
Ben got angry, and alas,
Made the matter worse; by calling
Little Tilly, Hoppergrass!

Fanny Field, he did make out
To call Jay-bird, once or twice,
And, in turn, she flew about,
Chirping very wild and nice.

Once she tried to make a wing,
Holding wide her linsey gown,

Make-believe.

And went flapping up and down,
Laughing so she couldn't sing.

But the captain to obey
When he called her Tilly May,
Was too hard for Mary,
And Matilda — praise to her —
Could not play the grasshopper,
But in honesty of heart,
Quite forgetful of her part,
Spoke to John M'Clary!

Thus the hay-making went on,
Very bad and very slow —
All the worse that Joe and John
Now were Mister John and Joe!

Work is work, and play is play,
And the two will not be one;
Therefore half the meadow-hay
Lay unraked at set of sun.

Then the farmer who had hired
All the seven girls and boys,
Being out of heart, and tired
With no work and much of noise,

Came upon them all at once,
And made havoc of their play.
Calling Benjamin a dunce,
In the stead of Captain Gray!

So to make excuse, in part,
For the unraked field of hay,
Tilly — bless her honest heart!
Up and told about the play.

How that Benny, discontented
With the work of raking hay,
Of his own head had invented
Such a pretty, pretty play!

“Benny calls it Make-believe!”
Tilly said, with cheeks aglow,
“Not at all, sir, to deceive,
But to make things fine, you know!”

Then she said, that he might see
Just how charming it must be,
“Fanny Field, sir, is a jay,
And her sister Mary,
Is myself, Matilda May,
Joe and John M'Clary,
Mister Joe and Mister John —
Sue a bluebird, and so on
Up to lofty Captain Gray.
Oh it is the funniest play!
Wouldn't you like to play it, sir?
I was just a grasshopper,
But I couldn't play my part!
Hopping, I was sure to fall —

Somehow, 'twas not in my heart,
But 'twas very nice, for all!"

Looking in the farmer's eyes,
All a-tiptoe stood the child;
Half in kindliness he smiled,
Half in pitiful surprise.

Then he said, "My little friends,"
Calling one by one their names,
Fanny Field and Mary,
Benjamin and Susan James,
Joe and John M'Clary,
And Matilda — "Life's great ends
Are not gained by make-believe.
This you all must learn at length,
Lies are weak and truth is strong,
And as much as you deceive,
Just so much you lose of strength —
Right is right, and wrong is wrong.

"If 'tis hay you want to make,
Mind this, every one of you!
You must call a rake, a rake,
And must use it smartly, too.

"Oh, be honest through and through!
Cherish truth until it grows,
And through all your being shows
Like the sunshine in the dew!

“Using power is getting power —
He that giveth seldom lacks,
Doing right, wrong done retrieves.”
Then the children turned their backs
On their foolish make-believes.
And in just a single hour
Filled the meadow full of stacks !

And as home they went that night,
Each and all had double pay
For the raking of that hay,
And the best pay was delight.



And I think without a doubt,
If they lived they all became
Wiser women, wiser men
For the lesson learned that day
Simple-hearted Tilly May,
Fanny Field and Mary,

Make-believe.

Susan James and Benjamin,
Joe and John M'Clary,
Leaving in their lives the game
Of the make-believing out ;
Yes, I think so, without doubt.





A NUT HARD TO CRACK.

SAYS John to his mother, "Look here! look here!

For my brain is on the rack —

I have gotten a nut as smooth to the sight
As the shell of an egg, and as fair and white,
Except for a streak of black.

Why that should mar it I can't make clear."

And Johnny's mother replied, "My dear,
Your nut will be hard to crack."

John, calling louder, "Look here! look here!

I want to get on the track,
And trace the meaning, for never a nut
Had outside fairer than this one, but
For this ugly streak of black!

I can't for my life its use make clear."

And Johnny's mother replied, "My dear,
Your nut will be hard to crack."

Then John, indignant, "Look here! look here!"

And he gave the hammer a thwack;
And there was the nut quite broke in two,
And all across it, and through and through,
The damaging streak of black!

"It grew with its growth," he says, "that's clear,
But why!" And his mother replied, "My dear,

That nut will be hard to crack."

Then John, in anger, "Look here! look here!

You may have your wisdom back.

The nut *is* cracked — broke all to splint,

But it doesn't give me even a hint

Toward showing *why* the black

Should spoil the else sweet meat." "My dear,"

Says Johnny's mother, "it's very clear

Your nut will be hard to crack.

"For, John, whichever way we steer,

There is evil on our track;

And whence it came, or how it fell,

No wisest man of all can tell.

We only know that black

Is mixed with white, and pain with bliss,

So all that I can say is this,

Your nut will be hard to crack."





HIDE AND SEEK.

As I sit and watch at the window-pane
The light in the sunset skies,
The pictures rise in my heart and brain,
As the stars do in the skies.

Among the rest, doth rise and pass,
With the blue smoke curling o'er,
The house I was born in, with the grass
And roses round the door.

I see the well-sweep, rough and brown,
And I hear the creaking tell
Of the bucket going up and down
On the stony sides of the well.

I see the cows, by the water-side —
Red Lily, and Pink, and Star, —
And the oxen with their horns so wide,
Close locked in playful war.

I see the field where the mowers stand
In the clover-flowers, knee-deep ;
And the one with his head upon his hand,
In the locust-shade asleep.

Hide and Seek.

I see beneath his shady brim,
The heavy eyelids sealed,
And the mowers stopping to look at him,
As they mow across the field.

I hear the bluebird's twit-te-tweet !
And the robin's whistle blithe ;
And then I see him spring to his feet,
And take up his shining scythe.

I see the barn with the door swung out, —
Still dark with its mildew streak, —
And the stacks, and the bushes all about,
Where we played at Hide and Seek !

I see and count the rafters o'er,
'Neath which the swallow sails,
And I see the sheaves on the threshing-floor,
And the threshers with their flails.

I hear the merry shout and laugh
Of the careless boys and girls,
As the wind-mill drops the golden chaff,
Like sunshine in their curls.

The shadow of all the years that stand
'Twixt me and my childhood's day,
I strip like a glove from off my hand,
And am there with the rest at play.

Out there, half hid in its leafy screen,
I can see a rose-red cheek,
And up in the hay-mow I catch the sheen
Of the darling head I seek.

Just where that whoop was smothered low,
I have seen the branches stir ;
It is there that Margaret hides, I know,
And away I chase for her !

And now with curls that toss so wide
They shade his eyes like a brim,
Runs Dick for a safer place to hide,
And I turn and chase for him !

And rounding close by the jutting stack,
Where it hangs in a rustling sheet,
In spite of the body that presses back,
I espy two tell-tale feet !

Now all at once, with a reckless shout,
Alphonse from his covert springs,
And whizzes by, with his elbows out,
Like a pair of sturdy wings.

Then Charley leaps from the cattle-rack,
And spins at so wild a pace,
The grass seems fairly swimming back
As he shouts, "I am home ! Base ! Base !"

Hide and Seek.

While modest Mary, shy as a nun,
Keeps close by the grape-vine wall,
And waits, and waits, till our game is done,
And never is found at all.

But suddenly, at my crimson pane,
The lights grow dim and die,
And the pictures fade from heart and brain,
As the stars do from the sky.

The bundles slide from the threshing-floor,
And the mill no longer whirls,
And I find my playmates now no more
By their shining cheeks and curls.

I call them far, and I call them wide,
From the prairie, and over the sea,
“Oh why do you tarry, and where do you hide!”
But they may not answer me.

God grant that when the sunset sky
Of my life shall cease to glow,
I may find them waiting me on high,
As I waited them below.





THREE BUGS.

THREE little bugs in a basket,
And hardly room for *two* !
And one was yellow, and one was black,
And one like me, or you.
The space was small, no doubt, for all ;
But what should *three* bugs do ?

Three little bugs in a basket,
And hardly crumbs for two ;
And all were selfish in their hearts,
The same as I or you ;
So the strong ones said, " We will eat the bread,
And that is what we'll do.

Three little bugs in a basket,
And the beds but two would hold ;
So they all three fell to quarreling —
The white, and black, and the gold ;
And two of the bugs got under the rugs,
And *one* was out in the cold !

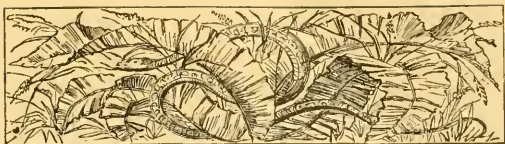
So he that was left in the basket,
Without a crumb to chew,
Or a thread to wrap himself withal,
When the wind across him blew,

Pulled one of the rugs from one of the bugs,
And so the quarrel grew !

And so there was *war* in the basket,
Ah, pity 'tis, 'tis true !
But he that was frozen and starved at last,
A strength from his weakness drew,
And pulled the rugs from *both* of the bugs,
And killed and *ate* them, too !

Now, when bugs live in a basket,
Though more than it well can hold,
It seems to me they had better agree —
The white, and the black, and the gold —
And share what comes of the beds and crumbs,
And leave no bug in the cold !





WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO TURN UP.

“AND why do you throw down your hoe by the way
As if that furrow were done?”
It was the good farmer, Bartholomew Grey,
That spoke on this wise to his son.

Now Barty, the younger, was not very bad,
But he didn't take kindly to work,
And the father had oftentimes said of the lad
That the thing he did best was to shirk!

It was early in May, and a beautiful morn—
The rosebuds tipt softly with red—
The pea putting on her white bloom, and the corn
Being just gotten up out of bed.

And after the first little break of the day
Had broadened itself on the blue,
The provident farmer, Bartholomew Grey,
Had driven a-field through the dew.

His brown mare, Fair Fanny, in collar and harness
Went before him, so sturdy and stout,
And ere the sun's fire yet had kindled to flames,
They had furrowed the field twice about.

And still as they came to the southerly slope
He reined in Fair Fanny, with Whoa!
And gazed toward the homestead, and gazed, in the
hope
Of seeing young Barty — but no!

“Asleep yet?” he said — “in a minute the horn
That shall call to the breakfast, will sound,
And all these long rows of the tender young corn
Left choking, and ploughed in the ground!”

Now this was the work, which the farmer had
planned
For Barty — a task kindly meant,
To follow the plough, with the hoe in his hand,
And to set up the stalks as he went.

But not till the minutes to hours had run,
And the heat was aglow far and wide,
Did he see his slow-footed and sleepy-eyed son
A-dragging his hoe by his side.

Midway of the cornfield he stopped, gaped around;
“What use is there working?” says he,
And saying so, threw himself flat on the ground
In the shade of a wide-spreading tree.

And this was the time, that Bartholomew Grey,
Fearing bad things might come to the worst,
Drew rein on Fair Fanny, the sweat wiped away,
And spoke as we quoted at first.

He had thought to have given the lad such a start
As would bring him at once to his feet,
And he stood in the furrow, amazed, as young Bart,
Lying lazy, and smiling so sweet,

Replied — “ The world owes me a living, you see,
And something, or sooner or late,
I’m certain as can be, will turn up for me,
And I am contented to wait !”

“ My son,” says the farmer, “ take this to your heart,
For to live in the world is to learn,
The good things that *turn up* are for the most part
The things we ourselves help to turn !

“ So boy, if you want to be sure of your bread
Ere the good time of working is gone,
Brush the cobwebs of nonsense all out of your head,
And take up your hoe, and move on !”





SUPPOSE.

How dreary would the meadows be
In the pleasant summer light,
Suppose there wasn't a bird to sing,
And suppose the grass was white !

And dreary would the garden be,
With all its flowery trees,
Suppose there were no butterflies,
And suppose there were no bees.

And what would all the beauty be,
And what the song that cheers,
Suppose we hadn't any eyes,
And suppose we hadn't ears ?

For though the grass were gay and green,
And song-birds filled the glen,
And the air were purple with butterflies,
What good would they do us then ?

Ah, think of it, my little friends ;
And when some pleasure flies,
Why, let it go, and still be glad
That you have your ears and eyes.



A GOOD RULE.

A FARMER, who owned a fine orchard, one day
Went out with his sons to take a survey,
The time of the year being April or May.

The buds were beginning to break into bloom,
The air all about him was rich with perfume,
And nothing, at first, waked a feeling of gloom.

But all at once, going from this place to that,
He shaded his eyes with the brim of his hat,
Saying, " Here is a tree dying out, that is flat ! "

He called his sons, Joseph and John, and said he,
This sweeting, you know, was my favorite tree —
Just look at the top now, and see what you see !

" The blossoms are blighted, and, sure as you live,
It won't have a bushel of apples to give !
What ails it ? the rest of the trees seem to thrive.

" Run, boys, bring hither your tools, and don't stop,
But take every branch that is falling alop,
And saw it out quickly, from bottom to top ! "

“Yes, father,” they said, and away they both ran —
For they always said *father*, and never *old man*,
And for my part I don't see how good children can.

And before a half hour of the morning was gone,
They were back in the orchard, both Joseph and John,
And presently all the dead branches were sawn.

“Well, boys,” said the farmer, “I think, for my share,
If the rain and the sunshine but second our care,
The old sweeting yet will be driven to bear!”

And so when a month, may be more, had gone by,
And borne out the June, and brought in the July,
He came back the luck of the pruning to try.

And lo! when the sweeting was reached, it was
found
That windfalls enough were strewn over the ground,
But never an apple all blushing and sound.

Then the farmer said, shaping his motions to suit,
First up to the boughs and then down to the fruit,
“Come Johnny, come Joseph, and dig to the root!”

And straightway they came with their spades and
their hoes,
And threw off their jackets, and shouting, “Here
goes!”
They digged down and down with the sturdiest
blows.

And, by and by, Joseph his grubbing-hoe drew
From the earth and the roots, crying, "Father,
look! do!"

And he pointed his words with the toe of his shoe!

And the farmer said, shap'ing a gesture to suit,
"I see why our sweeting has brought us no fruit—
There's a worm sucking out all the sap at the root!"

Then John took his spade with an awful grimace,
And lifted the ugly thing out of its place,
And put the loose earth back in very short space.

And when the next year came, it only is fair
To say, that the sweeting rewarded the care,
And bore them good apples, enough and to spare.

And now, my dear children, whenever you see
A life that is profitless, think of that tree;
For ten chances to one, you'll find there will be

Some habit of evil indulged day by day,
And hid as the earth-worm was hid in the clay,
That is steadily sapping the life-blood away.

The fruit, when the blossom is blighted, will fall
The sin will be searched out, no matter how small;
So, what you're ashamed to do, don't do at all.



TO MOTHER FAIRIE.

GOOD old mother Fairie,
Sitting by your fire,
Have you any little folk
You would like to hire?

I want no chubby drudges
To milk, and churn, and spin,
Nor old and wrinkled Brownies,
With grisly beards, and thin :

But patient little people,
With hands of busy care,
And gentle speech, and loving hearts ;
Say, have you such to spare ?

I know a poor, pale body,
Who cannot sleep at night,
And I want the little people
To keep her chamber bright ;

To chase away the shadows
That make her moan and weep,
To sing her loving lullabies,
And kiss her eyes asleep.

And when in dreams she reaches
For pleasures dead and gone,
To hold her wasted fingers,
And make the rings stay on.

They must be very cunning
To make the future shine
Like leaves, and flowers, and strawberries,
A-growing on one vine.

Good old mother Fairie,
Since my need you know,
Tell me, have you any folk
Wise enough to go?





BARBARA BLUE.

THERE was an old woman
Named Barbara Blue,
But not the old woman
Who lived in a shoe,
And didn't know what
With her children to do.

For she that I tell of
Lived all alone,
A miserly creature
As ever was known.
And had never a chick
Or child of her own.

She kept very still,
Some said she was meek ;
Others said she was only
Too stingy to speak ;
That her little dog fed
On one bone for a week !

She made apple-pies,
And she made them so tart
That the mouths of the children

Who ate them would smart ;
And these she went peddling
About in a cart.

One day, on her travels,
She happened to meet
A farmer, who said
He had apples so sweet
That all the town's-people
Would have them to eat.

“ And how do you sell them ? ”

Says Barbara Blue.

“ Why, if you want only

A bushel or two, ”

Says the farmer, “ I don't mind

To give them to you. ”

“ What ! give me a bushel ? ”

Cries Barbara Blue,

“ A bushel of apples,

And sweet apples, too ! ”

“ Be sure, ” says the farmer,

“ Be sure, ma'am, I do. ”

And then he said if she

Would give him a tart

(She had a great basket full

There in her cart),

He would show her the orchard,

And then they would part.

Barbara Blue.

So she picked out a little one,
 Burnt at the top,
And held it a moment,
 And then let it drop,
And then said she hadn't
 A moment to stop,
And drove her old horse
 Away, hippity hop !

One night when the air was
 All blind with the snow,
Dame Barbara, driving
 So soft and so slow
That the farmer her whereabouts
 Never would know,

Went after the apples ;
 And avarice grew
When she saw their red coats,
 Till, before she was through,
She took twenty bushels,
 Instead of the two !

She filled the cart full,
 And she heaped it a-top,
And if just an apple
 Fell off, she would stop,
And then drive ahead again,
 Hippity hop !

Her horse now would stumble,
And now he would fall,
And where the high river-bank
Sloped like a wall,
Sheer down, they went over it,
Apples and all !





TAKE CARE.

LITTLE children, you must seek
Rather to be good than wise,
For the thoughts you do not speak
Shine out in your cheeks and eyes.

If you think that you can be
Cross or cruel, and look fair,
Let me tell you how to see
You are quite mistaken there.

Go and stand before the glass,
And some ugly thought contrive,
And my word will come to pass
Just as sure as you're alive !

What you have, and what you lack,
All the same as what you wear,
You will see reflected back ;
So, my little folks, take care !

And not only in the glass
Will your secrets come to view ;

All beholders, as they pass,
Will perceive, and know them too.

Goodness shows in blushes bright,
Or in eyelids dropping down,
Like a violet from the light ;
Badness, in a sneer or frown.

Out of sight, my boys and girls,
Every root of beauty starts ;
So think less about your curls,
More about your minds and hearts.

Cherish what is good, and drive
Evil thoughts and feelings far ;
For, as sure as you're alive,
You will show for what you are.





THE GRATEFUL SWAN.

ONE day, a poor peddler,
Who carried a pack,
Felt something come
Flippity-flop on his back.

He looked east and west,
He turned white, he turned red,
Then bent his back lower,
And travelled ahead.

The sun was gone down
When he entered his door,
And loosened the straps
From his shoulders once more.

Then up sprang his wife,
Crying, " Bless your heart, John,
Here, sitting atop of your pack,
Is a swan !

" A wing like a lily,
A beak like a rose ;

Now good luck go with her
Wherever she goes!"

"Dear me!" cried the peddler,
"What fullness of crop!
No wonder I felt her
Come flippity-flop!"

"I'll bet you, good wife,
All the weight of my pack,
I've carried that bird
For ten miles on my back!"

"Perhaps," the wife answered,
"She'll lay a gold egg
To pay you; but, bless me!
She's broken a leg."

Then went to the cupboard,
And brought from the shelf
A part of the supper
She'd meant for herself.
Of course two such nurses
Effected a cure;
One leg stiff, but better
Than none, to be sure!

"No wonder," says John,
As she stood there a-lop,
"That I should have felt her
Come flippity-flop!"

The Grateful Swan.

Then straight to his pack
For a bandage he ran,
While Jannet, the good wife,
To splints broke her fan ;

And, thinking no longer
About the gold egg,
All tenderly held her
And bound up the leg ;

All summer they lived
Thus together — the swan,
And peddler and peddler's wife
Jannet and John.

At length, when the leaves
In the garden grew brown,
The bird came one day
With her head hanging down ;

And told her kind master
And mistress so dear,
She was going to leave them
Perhaps for a year.

“What mean you ?” cried Jannet,
“What mean you ?” cried John.
“You will see, if I ever
Come back,” said the swan.

And so, with the tears
Rolling down, drip-a-drop,
She lifted her snowy wings,
Flippity-flop!

And sailed away, stretching
Her legs and her neck,
Till all they could see
Was a little white speck.

Then Jannet said, turning
Her eyes upon John,
But speaking, no doubt,
Of the bird that was gone:

“A wing like a lily,
A beak like a rose;
And good luck go with her
Wherever she goes!”

The winter was weary,
But vanished at last,
As all winters will do;
And when it was past,

And doffies beginning
To show their bright heads,
One day as our Jannet
Was making the beds—

The Grateful Swan.

The beds in the garden,
I'd have you to know,
She saw in the distance
A speck white as snow.

She saw it sail nearer
And nearer, then stop
And land in her garden path,
Flippity-flop!

One moment of wonder,
Then cried she, "O John!
As true as you're living, man,
Here is our swan!

"And, by her sleek feathers,
She comes from the south;
But what thing is this
Shining so in her mouth?"

"A diamond!" cried Johnny;
The swan nearer drew,
And dropped it in Jannet's
Nice apron of blue;

Then held up the mended leg
Quite to her crop,
And danced her great wings
About, flippity-flop!

The Grateful Swan.

49

"I never beheld such a bird
In my life!"
Cried Johnny, the peddler;
"Nor I!" said his wife.

4





A SHORT SERMON.

CHILDREN, who read my lay,
Thus much I have to say :
Each day, and every day,
 Do what is right !
Right things, in great and small ;
Then, though the sky should fall,
Sun, moon, and stars, and all,
 You shall have light !

This further I would say :
Be you tempted as you may,
Each day, and every day,
 Speak what is true !
True things, in great and small ;
Then, though the sky should fall,
Sun, moon, and stars, and all,
 Heaven would show through !

Figs, as you see and know,
Do not out of thistles grow ;
And, though the blossoms blow
White on the tree,

Grapes never, never yet
On the limbs of thorns were set ;
So, if you a good would get,
Good you must be !

Life's journey, through and through,
Speaking what is just and true ;
Doing what is right to do
Unto one and all,
When you work and when you play,
Each day, and every day ;
Then peace shall gild your way,
Though the sky should fall.





STORY OF A BLACKBIRD.

COME, gather round me, children,
Who just as you please would do,
And hear me tell what fate befell,
A blackbird that I knew.

He lived one year in our orchard,
From spring till fall, you see,
And swung and swung, and sung and sung,
In the top of the highest tree.

He had a blood-red top-knot,
And wings that were tipped to match:
And he held his head as if he said,
"I'm a fellow hard to catch!"

And never built himself a nest,
Nor took a mate — not he!
But swung and swung, and sung and sung,
In the top of the highest tree.

And yet, the little bluebird,
So modest and so shy,
Could beat him to death with a single breath,
If she had but a mind to try.

And the honest, friendly robin,
That went in a russet coat,
Though he wasn't the bird that sung to be heard,
Had twice as golden a throat.

But robin, bluebird, and all the birds,
Were afraid as they could be ;
He looked so proud and sung so loud,
Atop of the highest tree.

We often said, we children,
He only wants to be seen !
For his bosom set like a piece of jet,
In the glossy leaves of green.

He dressed his feathers again and again,
Till the oil did fairly run,
And the tuft on his head, of bright blood red,
Like a ruby shone in the sun.

But summer lasts not always,
And the leaves they faded brown ;
And when the breeze went over the trees,
They fluttered down and down.

The robin, and wren, and bluebird,
They sought a kindlier clime ;
But the blackbird cried, in his foolish pride,
“ I'll see my own good time ! ”

And whistled, whistled, and whistled,
Perhaps to hide his pain ;
Until, one day, the air grew gray,
With the slant of the dull, slow rain.

And then, wing-tip and top-knot,
They lost their blood-red shine ;
Unhoused to be, in the top of a tree,
Was not so very fine !

At first he cowered and shivered,
And then he ceased to sing,
And then he spread about his head,
One drenched and dripping wing.

And stiffer winds at sunset,
Began to beat and blow ;
And next daylight the ground was white
With a good inch-depth of snow !

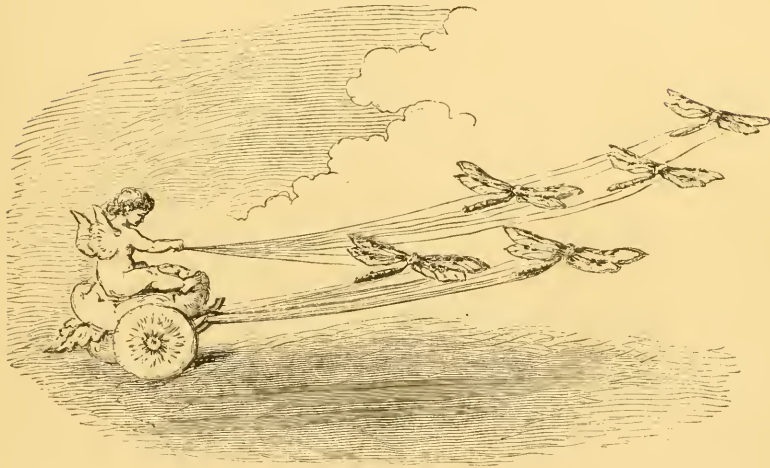
And oh, for the foolish blackbird,
That hadn't a house for his head !
The bitter sleet began at his feet
And chilled and killed him dead !

And the rabbit, when he saw him,
Enwrapt in his snowy shroud,
Let drop his ears and said, with tears,
" This comes of being proud."



FAIRY-FOLK.

THE story-books have told you
Of the fairy-folks so nice,
That make them leathern aprons
Of the ears of little mice ;



And wear the leaves of roses,
Like a cap upon their heads,
And sleep at night on thistle-down,
Instead of feather beds !

Fairy-Folk.

These stories, too, have told you,
No doubt to your surprise,
That the fairies ride in coaches
That are drawn by butterflies ;
And come into your chambers,
When you are locked in dreams,
And right across your counterpanes
Make bold to drive their teams ;
And that they heap your pillows
With their gifts of rings and pearls ;
But do not heed such idle tales,
My little boys and girls.

There are no fairy-folk that ride
About the world at night,
Who give you rings and other things,
To pay for doing right.
But if you do to others what
You'd have them do to you,
You'll be as blest as if the best
Of story-books were true.





BURIED GOLD.

In a little bird's-nest of a house,
About the color of a mouse,
 And low, and quaint, and square —
Twenty feet, perhaps, in all —
With never a chamber nor a hall,
 There lived a queer old pair
Once on a time. They are dead and gone ;
But in their day their names were John
 And Emeline Adair.

John used to sit and take his ease,
With two great patches at his knees,
 And spectacles on his nose,
With a bit of twine or other thread,
That met behind his heavy head
 And tied the big brass bows.

His jacket was a snuffy brown,
His coat was just a farmer's gown,
 That once had been bright blue ;
But the oldest man could hardly say
When it was not less blue than gray,
It was frayed and faded such a way,
 And both the elbows through !

Buried Gold.

But, somehow or other, Emeline
Went dressed in silks and laces fine ;
 She was proud and high of head,
And she used to go, and go, and go,
Through mud and mire, and rain and snow,
Visiting high and visiting low,
As idle gossips will, you know ;
And many a thing that wasn't so
 She told, the neighbors said.

Amongst the rest, that her husband John,
Though his gown was poor to look upon,
 And his trowsers patched and old,
Had money to spend, and money to spare,
As sure as her name was Mrs. Adair ;
And though she said it, who say it should not,
Somewhere back or front of their lot,
He had buried her iron dinner-pot,
A pewter pan, and she didn't know what
Beside, choke-full of gold !

Well, by and by her tongue got still,
That had clattered and clattered like a mill,
Little for good, and a good deal for ill,
Having all her lifetime had her will —

 The poor old woman died :
And John, when he missed the whirl and whir
Of her goosey-gabble, refused to stir,
But moped till he broke his heart for her ;
 And they laid him by her side.

And lo! his neighbors, young and old,
Who had heard about the pot of gold
Of which old Mrs. Adair had told,
 Got spades, and picks, and bars.
You would have thought, had you seen them dig,
Sage and simple, little and big,
Up and down and across the lot,
They expected not only to find the pot
 And the pan, but the moon and stars!

Just one, and only one man stayed
At home and plied an honest trade,
 Contented to be told
How they digged down under the shed,
And up and out through the turnip-bed,
Turning every inch of the lot,
And never finding sign of the pot
 That was buried full of gold!

And when ten years were come and gone,
And poor old Emeline and John
 Had nearly been forgot,
This careful, quiet man that stayed
At home and plied an honest trade,
 Was the owner of the lot —
Such luck to industry doth fall.
And he built a house with a stately hall,
Full fifty feet from wall to wall :

And the foolish ones were envious
That he should be rewarded thus

Upon the very spot
Where they had digged their strength away,
Day and night, till their heads were gray,
In search of the pan and pot
Which Mrs. Emeline Adair
Had made believe were buried there,
As buried they were not.





RECIPE FOR AN APPETITE.

My lad, who sits at breakfast
With forehead in a frown,
Because the chop is under-done,
And the fritter over-brown, —

Just leave your dainty mincing,
And take, to mend your fare,
A slice of golden sunshine,
And a cup of the morning air.

And when you have eat and drunken,
If you want a little fun,
Throw by your jacket of broadcloth,
And take an up-hill run.

And what with one and the other
You will be so strong and gay,
That work will be only a pleasure
Through all the rest of the day.

And when it is time for supper,
Your bread and milk will be
As sweet as a comb of honey.
Will you try my recipe ?



THE PIG AND THE HEN.

THE pig and the hen,
They both got in one pen,
And the hen said she wouldn't go out.
"Mistress Hen," says the pig,
"Don't you be quite so big!"
And he gave her a push with his snout.

"You are rough, and you're fat,
But who cares for all that ;
I will stay if I choose," says the hen.
"No, mistress, no longer !"
Says pig : "I'm the stronger,
And mean to be boss of my pen !"

Then the hen cackled out
Just as close to his snout
As she dare : "You're an ill-natured brute ;
And if I had the corn,
Just as sure as I'm born,
I would send you to starve or to root !"

"But you don't own the cribs ;
So I think that my ribs
Will be never the leaner for you :

This trough is my trough,
And the sooner you're off,"
Says the pig, " why the better you'll do !"

" You're not a bit fair,
And you're cross as a bear :
What harm do I do in your pen ?
But a pig is a pig,
And I don't care a fig
For the worst you can say," says the hen.

Says the pig, " You will care
If I *act* like a bear
And tear your two wings from your neck."
" What a nice little pen
You have got !" says the hen,
Beginning to scratch and to peck.

Now the pig stood amazed,
And the bristles, upraised
A moment past, fell down so sleek.
" Neighbor Biddy," says he,
" If you'll just allow me,
I will show you a nice place to pick !"

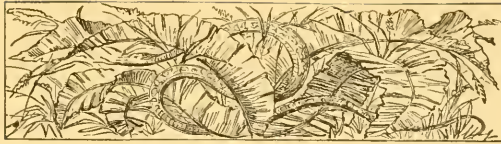
So she followed him off,
And they ate from one trough —
They had quarreled for nothing, they saw ;
And when they had fed,
" Neighbor Hen," the pig said,
" Won't you stay here and roost in my straw ?"

The Pig and the Hen.

“No, I thank you ; you see
That I sleep in a tree,”
Says the hen ; “but I *must* go away ;
So a grateful good-by.”
“Make your home in my sty,”
Says the pig, “and come in every day.”

Now my child will not miss
The true moral of this
Little story of anger and strife ;
For a word spoken soft
Will turn enemies oft
Into friends that will stay friends for life.





SPIDER AND FLY.

ONCE when morn was flowing in,
Broader, redder, wider,
In her house with walls so thin
That they could not hide her,
Just as she would never spin,
Sat a little spider —
Sat she on her silver stairs,
Meek as if she said her prayers.

Came a fly, whose wings had been
Making circles wider,
Having but the buzz and din
Of herself to guide her.
Nearer to these walls so thin,
Nearer to the spider,
Sitting on her silver stairs,
Meek as if she said her prayers.

Said the silly fly, " Too long
Malice has belied her ;
How should she do any wrong,
With no walls to hide her ? "

Spider and Fly.

So she buzzed her pretty song
To the wily spider,
Sitting on her silver stairs
Meek as though she said her prayers.

But in spite her modest mien,
Had the fly but eyed her
Close enough, she would have seen
Fame had not belied her —
That, as she had always been,
She was still a spider ;
And that she was not at prayers,
Sitting on her silver stairs.





A LESSON OF MERCY.

A BOY named Peter
Found once in the road
All harmless and helpless,
A poor little toad ;

And ran to his playmate,
And all out of breath
Cried, " John, come and help,
And we'll stone him to death !"

And picking up stones,
The two went on the run,
Saying, one to the other,
" Oh won't we have fun ?"

Thus primed and all ready,
They'd got nearly back,
When a donkey came
Dragging a cart on the track.

Now the cart was as much
As the donkey could draw,
And he came with his head
Hanging down ; so he saw,

A Lesson of Mercy.

All harmless and helpless,
The poor little toad,
A-taking his morning nap
Right in the road.

He shivered at first,
Then he drew back his leg,
And set up his ears,
Never moving a peg.

Then he gave the poor toad,
With his warm nose, a dump,
And he woke and got off
With a hop and a jump.

And then with an eye
Turned on Peter and John,
And hanging his homely head
Down, he went on.

“We can't kill him now, John,”
Says Peter, “that's flat,
In the face of an eye and
An action like that!”

“For my part, I haven't
The heart to,” says John;
“But the load is too heavy
That donkey has on :

“Let 's help him ;” so both lads
Set off with a will
And came up with the cart
At the foot of the hill.

And when each a shoulder
Had put to the wheel,
They helped the poor donkey
A wonderful deal.

When they got to the top
Back again they both run,
Agreeing they never
Had had better fun.





THE FLOWER-SPIDER.¹

You've read of a spider, I suppose,
Dear children, or been told,
That has a back as red as a rose,
And legs as yellow as gold.

Well, one of these fine creatures ran
In a bed of flowers, you see,
Until a drop of dew in the sun
Was hardly as bright as she.

Her two plump sides, they were besprent
With speckles of all dies,
And little shimmering streaks were bent
Like rainbows round her eyes.

Well, when she saw her legs a-shine,
And her back as red as a rose,
She thought that she herself was fine
Because she had fine clothes!

Then wild she grew, like one possessed,
For she thought, upon my word,

¹ A spider that lives among flowers, and takes its color from them.

That she wasn't a spider with the rest,
And set up for a bird !

Ay, for a humming-bird at that !
And the summer day all through,
With her head in a tulip-bell she sat,
The same as the hum-birds do.

She had her little foolish day,
But her pride was doomed to fall,
And what do you think she had to pay
In the ending of it all ?

Just this ; on dew she could not sup,
And she could not sup on pride,
And so, with her head in the tulip cup,
She starved until she died !

For in despite of the golden legs,
And the back as red as a rose,
With what is hatched from the spider's eggs
The spider's nature goes !





DAN AND DIMPLE, AND HOW THEY QUARRELED.

To begin in things quite simple
Quarrels scarcely ever fail —
And they fell out, Dan and Dimple,
All about a horse's tail!

So that by and by the quarrel
Quite broke up and spoiled their play;
Danny said the tail was sorrel,
Dimple said it was gray!

"*Gray!*" said Danny — "You are simple!"
"Just as gray as mother's shawl!"
"And that's red!" Said saucy Dimple,
"You're a fool, and that is all!"

Then the sister and the brother —
As indeed they scarce could fail,
In such anger, struck each other —
All about the horse's tail!

"*Red!*" cried Dimple, speaking loudly,
"How you play at fast and loose!"
"Yes," said Danny, still more proudly,
"When I'm playing with a goose!"

In between them came the mother :

“What is all this fuss about?”

Then the sister and the brother

Told the story, out and out.

And she answered, “I must label

Each of you a little dunce,

Since to look into the stable

Would have settled it at once!”

Forth ran Dan with Dimple after,

And full soon came hurrying back

Shouting, all alee with laughter,

That the horse’s tail was black!

So they both agreed to profit

By the lesson they had learned,

And to tell each other of it

Often as the fit returned.





TO A HONEY-BEE.

“BUSY-BODY, busy-body,
Always on the wing,
Wait a bit, where you have lit,
And tell me why you sing.”

Up, and in the air again,
Flap, flap, flap!
And now she stops, and now she drops
Into the rose's lap.

“Come, just a minute come,
From your rose so red.”
Hum, hum, hum, hum —
That was all she said.

Busy-body, busy-body,
Always light and gay,
It seems to me, for all I see,
Your work is only play.

And now the day is sinking to
The goldenest of eves,
And she doth creep for quiet sleep
Among the lily-leaves.

“Come, just a moment come,
From your snowy bed.”
Hum, hum, hum, hum —
That was all she said.

But, the while I mused, I learned
The secret of her way:
Do my part with cheerful heart,
And turn my work to play.





AT THE TAVERN.

“WHAT’LL you have, John?

Cider or gin?

Or something stronger?

Walk right in.

Hurry up, landlord,

With main and might,

And don’t make a thirsty man

Wait all night!

“Not any cider?

And ale won’t do.

A brandy-smasher, then,

Glasses for two!

And mind you, landlord,

Mix it strong,

And don’t keep us waiting here

All night long!

“Not any brandy?

Landlord, drum

Something or other up.

Got any rum?

Step about lively!

Hot and strong,

And don't keep us waiting here
All night long!

“Not any toddy?
Not the least little bit?
Wiskey and water, then,
That must be it!
Step about, landlord,
We're all right,
And don't make a thirsty man
Wait all night!”

“What's wrong now, John?
Come, sit down.
Don't you like white sugar?
Then have brown.
And, landlord, hark ye,
Cigars and a light,
And don't keep us waiting here
Quite all night!”

“What'll I have, man?
The right, to be sure,
To keep all the sense that
God gave me secure!
The right to myself, man,
And, in the next place,
The right to look all
Honest men in the face!

At the Tavern.

“ So, waiter, you need not
Be off on the run
Till I've countermanded
All orders but one :
No liquor, no sugar,
Nor brown, nor yet white,
And don't fetch cigars in,
And don't fetch a light !

“ We're on our way home
To our children and wives,
And wouldn't stay plaguing them
Not for our lives ;
Fetch only the water,
The rest is all wrong,
We can't take the chances
Of staying too long.”





WHAT A BIRD TAUGHT.

“ WHY do you come to my apple-tree,
Little bird so grey? ”
Twit-twit, twit-twit, twit-twit-twee !
That was all he would say.

“ Why do you lock your rosy feet
So closely round the spray? ”
Twit-twit, twit-twit, twit-tweet !
That was all he would say.

“ Why on the topmost bough do you get,
Little bird so grey? ”
Twit-twit-twee, twit-twit-twit !
That was all he would say.

“ Where is your mate? come answer me,
Little bird so grey! ”
Twit-twit-twit! twit-twit-twee !
That was all he would say.

“ And has she little rosy feet?
And is her body grey? ”
Twit-twit-twee ! twit-twit-twit !
That was all he would say.

What a Bird Taught.

“ And will she come with you and sit
In my apple-tree some day ? ”
Twit-twit-twee ! twit-twit-twit !
He said as he flew away.

“ Twit-twit ! twit-twit ! twit ! tweet ! ”
Why, what in that should be
To make it seem so very sweet ?
And then it came to me.

This little wilding of the wood,
With wing so grey and fleet,
Did just the best for you he could,
And that is why 'twas sweet.





OLD MAXIMS. I.

“Hoe your own row.”

I THINK there are some maxims
Under the sun,
Scarce worth preservation ;
But here, boys, is one
So sound and so simple
’Tis worth while to know ;
And all in the single line,
“Hoe your own row !”

If you want to have riches,
And want to have friends,
Don’t trample the means down
And look for the ends ;
But always remember
Wherever you go,
The wisdom of practicing,
“Hoe your own row !”

Don’t just sit and pray
For increase of your store,
But work ; who will help himself,
Heaven helps more.

The weeds while you're sleeping,
 Will come up and grow,
 But if you would have the
 Full ear, you must hoe!

Nor will it do only
 To hoe out the weeds,
 You must make your ground mellow
 And put in the seeds ;
 And when the young blade
 Pushes through, you must know
 There is nothing will strengthen
 Its growth like the hoe!

There 's no use of saying
 What will be, will be ;
 Once try it, my lack-brain,
 And see what you'll see!
 Why, just small potatoes,
 And few in a row ;
 You'd better take hold then,
 And honestly hoe!

A good many workers
 I've known in my time —
 Some builders of houses,
 Some builders of rhyme ;
 And they that were prospered,
 Were prospered, I know,
 By the intent and meaning of
 "Hoe your own row!"

I've known too, a good many
Idlers, who said,
"I've right to my living,
The world owes me bread!"
A *right!* lazy lubber!
A thousand times No!
'Tis his, and his only
Who hoes his own row.





PETER GREY.

HONEST little Peter Grey
Keeps at work the livelong day,
For his mother is as poor as a mouse ;
Now running up and down
Doing errands in the town,
And now doing chores about the house.

The boys along the street
Often call him Hungry Pete,
Because that his face is so pale ;
And ask, by way of jest,
If his ragged coat and vest
And his old-fashioned hat are for sale.

But little Peter Grey
Never any shape nor way
Doth evil for evil return ;
He is finer than his clothes,
And no matter where he goes
There is some one the fact to discern.

You might think a sneer, mayhap,
Just a feather in your cap,

If you saw him being pushed to the wall ;
But my proudly-foolish friend,
You might find out in the end
You had sneered at your betters, after all.

He is climbing up his way
On life's ladder day by day ;
And you who, to laugh at him, stop
On the lower rounds, will wake,
If I do not much mistake,
To find him sitting snug at the top.





A SERMON

FOR YOUNG FOLKS.

Don't ever go hunting for pleasures —
They cannot be found thus I know ;
Nor yet fall a-digging for treasures,
Unless with the spade and the hoe !

The bee has to work for the honey,
The drone has no right to the food,
And he who has not earned his money
Will get out of his money no good.

The ant builds her house with her labor,
The squirrel looks out for his mast,
And he who depends on his neighbor
Will never have friends, first or last.

In short, 'tis no better than thieving,
Though *thief* is a harsh name to call ;
Good things to be always receiving,
And never to give back at all.

And do not put off till to-morrow
The thing that you ought to do now,

But first set the share in the furrow,
And then set your hand to the plough.

The time is too short to be waiting,
The day maketh haste to the night,
And it's just as hard work to be hating
Your work as to do it outright.

Know this, too, before you are older,
And all the fresh morning is gone,
Who puts to the world's wheel a shoulder
Is he that will move the world on!

Don't weary out will with delaying,
And when you are crowded, don't stop;
Believe me there's truth in the saying:
"There always is room at the top."

To conscience be true, and to man true.
Keep faith, hope, and love, in your breast,
And when you have done all you can do,
Why, then you may trust for the rest.





TELLING FORTUNES.

"Be not among wine-bibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh; for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty; and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags." — PROV. xxiii. 20, 21.

I'LL tell you two fortunes, my fine little lad,
For you to accept or refuse.
The one of them good, and the other one bad;
Now hear them, and say which you choose!

I see by my gift, within reach of your hand,
A fortune right fair to behold;
A house and a hundred good acres of land,
With harvest fields yellow as gold.

I see a great orchard, the boughs hanging down
With apples of russet and red;
I see droves of cattle, some white and brown,
But all of them sleek and well-fed.

I see doves and swallows about the barn-doors,
See the fanning-mill whirling so fast,
See men that are threshing the wheat on the floors;
And now the bright picture is past!

And I see, rising dismally up in the place
Of the beautiful house and the land,
A man with a fire-red nose on his face,
And a little brown jug in his hand !

Oh ! if you beheld him, my lad, you would wish
That he were less wretched to see ;
For his boot-toes, they gape like the mouth of a fish,
And his trousers are out at the knee !

In walking he staggers now this way, now that,
And his eyes they stand out like a bug's,
And he wears an old coat and a battered-in hat,
And I think that the fault is the jug's !

For our text says the drunkard shall come to be poor,
And drowsiness clothes men with rags ;
And he doesn't look much like a man, I am sure,
Who has honest hard cash in his bags.

Now which will you choose ? to be thrifty and snug,
And to be right side up with your dish ;
Or to go with your eyes like the eyes of a bug,
And your shoes like the mouth of a fish !





THE WISE FAIRY.

ONCE, in a rough, wild country,
On the other side of the sea,
There lived a dear little fairy,
And her home was in a tree.
A dear little, queer little fairy,
And as rich as she could be.



To northward and to southward,
She could overlook the land,
And that was why she had her house
In a tree, you understand.
For she was the friend of the friendless,
And her heart was in her hand.

And when she saw poor women
 Patiently, day by day,
Spinning, spinning, and spinning
 Their lonesome lives away,
She would hide in the flax of their distaffs
 A lump of gold, they say.

And when she saw poor ditchers,
 Knee-deep in some wet dyke,
Digging, digging, and digging,
 To their very graves, belike,
She would hide a shining lump of gold
 Where their spades would be sure to strike.



And when she saw poor children
 Their goats from the pastures take,
Or saw them milking and milking,
 Till their arms were ready to break,

What a plashing in their milking-pails
Her gifts of gold would make !



Sometimes in the night, a fisher
Would hear her sweet low call,
And all at once a salmon of gold
Right out of his net would fall ;
But what I have to tell you
Is the strangest thing of all.

If any ditcher, or fisher,
Or child, or spinner old,
Bought shoes for his feet, or bread to eat,
Or a coat to keep from the cold,
The gift of the good old fairy
Was always trusty gold.

But if a ditcher, or fisher,
Or spinner, or child so gay,

Bought jewels, or wine, or silks so fine,
Or staked his treasure at play,
The fairy's gold in his very hold
Would turn to a lump of clay.



So, by and by the people
Got open their stupid eyes :

"We must learn to spend to some good end,"
They said, "if we are wise ;
'Tis not in the gold we waste or hold,
That a golden blessing lies."





A CHILD'S WISDOM.

WHEN the cares of day are ended,
And I take my evening rest,
Of the windows of my chamber
This is that I love the best ;
This one facing to the hill-tops
And the orchards of the west.

All the woodlands, dim and dusky,
All the fields of waving grain,
All the valleys sprinkled over
With the drops of sunlit rain,
I can see them through the twilight,
Sitting here beside my pane.

I can see the hilly places,
With the sheep-paths trod across ;
See the fountains by the waysides,
Each one in her house of moss,
Holding up the mist above her
Like a skein of silken floss.

Garden corners bright with roses,
Garden borders set with mint,
Garden beds, wherein the maidens
Sow their seeds, as love doth hint,

To some rhyme of mystic charming
That shall come back all in print.

Ah! with what a world of blushes
Then they read it through and through,
Weeding out the tangled sentence
From the commas of the dew :
Little ladies, choose ye wisely,
Lest some day the choice ye rue.

I can see a troop of children,
Merry-hearted boys and girls,
Eyes of light and eyes of darkness,
Feet of coral, legs of pearls,
Racing toward the morning school-house
Half a head before their curls.

One from all the rest I single,
Not for brighter mouth or eyes,
Not for being sweet and simple,
Not for being sage and wise :
With my whole full heart I loved him,
And therein my secret lies.

Cheeks as brown as sun could kiss them,
All in careless homespun dressed,
Eager for the romp or wrestle,
Just a rustic with the rest :
Who shall say what love is made of?
'Tis enough I loved him best.

Haply, Effie loved me better —
She with arms so lily fair,
In her sadness, in her gladness,
Stealing round me unaware ;
Dusky shadows of the cairngorms
All among her golden hair.

Haply, so did willful Annie,
With the tender eyes and mouth,
And the languors and the angers
Of her birth-land of the South :
Still my darling was my darling —
“ I can love,” I said, “ for both.”

So I left the pleasure-places,
Gayest, gladdest, best of all —
Hedge-row mazes, lanes of daisies,
Bluebirds' twitter, blackbirds' call —
For the robbing of the crow's nest,
For the games of race and ball.

So I left my book of poems
Lying in the hawthorn's shade,
Milky flowers sometimes for hours
Drifting down the page unread.
“ He has found a better poet ;
I will read with him,” I said.

Thus he led me, hither, thither,
To his young heart's wild content,

Where so surly and so curly,
With his black horns round him bent,
Fed the ram that ruled the meadow—
For where'er he called I went :

Where the old oak, black and blasted,
Trembled on his knotty knees,
Where the nettle teased the cattle,
Where the wild crab-apple trees
Blushed with bitter fruit to mock us ;
'Twas not I that was to please :

Where the ox, with horn for pushing,
Chafed within his prison stall ;
Where the long-leaved poison-ivy
Clambered up the broken wall :
Ah ! no matter, still I loved him
First and last and best of all.

When before the frowning master
Late and lagging in we came,
I would stand up straight before him,
And would take my even blame :
Ah ! my darling was my darling ;
Good or bad 'twas all the same.

One day, when the lowering storm-cloud
South and east began to frown,
Flat along the waves of grasses,
Like a swimmer, he lay down,

With his head propped up and resting
On his two arms strong and brown.

On the sloping ridge behind us
Shone the yet ungarnered sheaves ;
Round about us ran the shadows
Of the overhanging leaves,
Rustling in the wind as softly
As a lady's silken sleeves.

Where a sudden notch before us
Made a gateway in the hill,
And a sense of desolation
Seemed the very air to fill,
There beneath the weeping-willows
Lay the grave-yard, hushed and still.

Pointing over to the shoulders
Of the head-stones, white and high,
Said I, in his bright face looking,
"Think you you shall ever lie
In among those weeping willows?"
"No!" he said, "I cannot die!"

"Cannot die? my little darling,
'Tis the way we all must go!"
Then the bold bright spirit in him
Setting all his cheek aglow,
He repeated still the answer,
"I shall never die, I know!"

“Wait and think. On yonder hill-side
There are graves as short as you.
Death is strong.” — “But He who made Death
Is as strong, and stronger too.
Death may take me, God will wake me,
And will make me live anew.”

Since we sat within the elm shade
Talking as the storm came on,
Many a blessed hope has vanished,
Many a year has come and gone ;
But that simple, sweet believing
Is the staff I lean upon.

From my arms, so closely clasping,
Long ago my darling fled ;
Morning brightness makes no lightness
In the darkness where I tread :
He is lost, and I am lonely,
But I know he is not dead.





BALLADS FOR LITTLE FOLK.

BY PHŒBE CARY.

TO THE CHILDREN.

DEAR little children, where'er you be,
Who are watched and cherished tenderly
By father and by mother ;
Who are comforted by the love that lies
In the kindly depths of a sister's eyes,
Or the helpful words of a brother :

I charge you by the years to come,
When some shall be far away from your home,
And some shall be gone forever ;
By all you will have to feel at the last,
When you stand alone and think of the past,
That you speak unkindly never !

For cruel words, nay, even less,
Words spoken only in thoughtlessness,
Nor kept against you after ;

To the Children.

If they made the face of a mother sad,
Or a tender sister's heart less glad,
Or checked a brother's laughter ;

Will rise again, and they will be heard,
And every thoughtless, foolish word
That ever your lips have spoken,
After the lapse of years and years,
Will wring from you such bitter tears
As fall when the heart is broken.

May you never, never have to say,
When a wave from the past on some dreary day
Its wrecks at your feet is strewing,
"My father had not been bowed so low,
Nor my mother left us long ago,
But for deeds of my misdoing !"

May you never stand alone to weep
Where a little sister lies asleep,
With the flowery turf upon her,
And know you would have gone down to the dead
To save one curl of her shining head
From sorrow or dishonor :

Yet have to think, with bitter tears,
Of some little sin of your childish years,
Till your soul is anguish-riven ;
And cry, when there comes no word or smile,
"I sinned, but I loved you all the while,
And I wait to be forgiven !"

May you never say of a brother dear,
“ Did I do enough to aid and cheer,
 Did I try to help and guide him ?
Now the snares of the world about him lie,
And if unhonored he live and die,
 I shall wish I were dead beside him ! ”

Dear little innocent, precious ones,
Be loving, dutiful daughters and sons,
 To father and to mother ;
And, to save yourselves from the bitter pain
That comes when regret and remorse are vain,
 Be good to one another !





GRISELDA GOOSE.

NEAR to a farm-house, and bordered round
By a meadow, sweet with clover,
There lay as clear and smooth a pond
As ever a goose swam over.

The farmer had failures in corn and hops,
From drought and various reasons ;
But his geese had never failed in their crops
In the very worst of seasons.

And he had a flock, that any day
Could defy all sneers and slanders ;
They were certainly handsome, — that is to say,
They were handsome for geese and ganders !

And, once upon a time, in spring,
A goose hatched out another, —
The softest, cunningest, downiest thing,
That ever gladdened a mother.

There was never such a gosling born,
So the geese cried out by dozens ;
She was praised and petted, night and morn,
By aunts, and uncles, and cousins.

She must have a name with a lofty sound,
Said all, when they beheld her ;
So they proudly led her down to the pond,
And christened her, Griselda !

Now you think, no doubt, such love and pride,
Must perfectly content her ;
That she grew to goosehood satisfied
To be what Nature meant her.

But folk with gifts will find it out,
Though the world neglects that duty ;
And a lovely female will seldom doubt,
Though others may, her beauty !

And if she had thought herself a fright,
And been content with her station,
She wouldn't have had a story to write,
Nor I, my occupation.

But indeed the truth compels me to own,
Whoever may be offended,
That my heroine's vanity was shown
Ere her gosling days were ended.

When the mother tried to teach the art
Of swimming to her daughter,
She said that she didn't like to start,
Because it ruffled the water.

“My stars!” cried the parent, “do I dream,
Or do I rightly hear her?
Can it be she would rather sit still on the stream,
Than spoil her beautiful mirror?”

Yet, if any creature could be so fond
Of herself, as to reach insanity,
A goose, who lives on a glassy pond,
Has most excuse for such vanity!

And I do not agree with those who said
They would glory in her disgraces;
Her's isn't the only goose's head
That ever was turned by praises.

And Griselda swallowed all their praise:
Though she said to her doting mother,
“Still, a goose is a goose, to the end of her days,
From one side of the world to the other!

“And as to my name, it is well enough
To say, or sing, or whistle;
But you just wait till I'm old and tough,
And you'll see they will call me, Gristle!”

So she went, for the most of the time, alone,
Because she was such a scoffer;
And, awful to tell! she was nearly grown
Before she received an offer!

“Nobody will have her, that is clear,”
Said those who spitefully eyed her ;
Though they knew every gander, far and near,
Was dying to waddle beside her.

And some of those that she used to slight,
Now come to matronly honor,
Began to feel that they had a right
To quite look down upon her.

And some she had jilted were heard to declare,
“I do not understand her ;
And I shouldn't wonder, and shouldn't care,
If she never got a gander !”

But she said so all could overhear, —
And she hoped their ears might tingle, —
“If she couldn't marry above their sphere,
She preferred remaining single !”

She was praised and flattered to her face,
And blamed when she was not present ;
And between her friends and foes, her place
Was anything but pleasant.

One day she learned what gave her a fright,
And a fit of deep dejection ;
And she said to herself, that come what might,
She would cut the whole connection.

The farmer's wife to the geese proposed,
Their spending the day in the stable ;
And the younger ones, left out, supposed
She would set an extra table.

So they watched and waited till day was done,
With curiosity burning ;
For it wasn't till after set of sun,
That they saw them back returning.

Slowly they came, and each was bowed
As if some disgrace was upon her ;
They didn't look as those who are proud
Of an unexpected honor !

Each told the naked truth : 'twas a shock,
But who that saw, could doubt her ?
They had plucked the pluckiest goose of the flock,
Of all the down about her.

Said Miss Griselda, " That 's my doom,
If I stay another season ;"
So she thought she'd leave her roosting room ;
And I think she had some reason.

Besides, there was something else she feared ;
For oft in a kind of flurry,
A goose mysteriously disappeared,
And didn't come back in a hurry.

And scattered afterwards on the ground, —
Such things there is no mistaking, —
Familiar looking bones were found,
Which set her own a quaking.

She said, "There is danger if I stay,
From which there are none exempted ;
So, though I perish in getting away,
The thing shall be attempted."

And, perfectly satisfied about
Her claims to a foreign mission,
She slipped away, and started out
On a secret expedition.

And oh ! how her bosom swelled with pride ;
How eager hope upbore her ;
As floating down the stream, she spied
A broad lake spread before her.

And bearing towards her, fair and white,
The pleasant breezes courting,
A flock of swans came full in sight,
On the crystal waters sporting.

She saw the lake spread clear and wide,
And the rich man's stately dwelling,
And felt the thrill of hope and pride
Her very gizzard swelling.

“These swans,” she said, “are quite unknown,
Even to their ranks and stations ;
Yet I think I need not fear to own
Such looking birds for relations.

“Besides, no birds that walk on lawns
Are made for common uses ;
Men do not take their pick of swans
In the way they do of *gooses*.

“Blanche Swan! I think I’ll take that name,
Nor be ashamed to wear it ;
Griselda Goose! that sounds so tame
And low, I cannot bear it!”

Thought she, the brave deserve to win,
And only they can do it :
So she made her plan, and sailed right in,
Determined to go through it.

Straight up she went to the biggest swan,
The one who talked the loudest :
For she knew the secret of getting on
Was standing up with the proudest.

“Madam,” she said, “I am glad you’re home,
And I hope to know you better ;
You’re an aunt of mine, I think, but I come
With an introductory letter.”

Then she fumbled, and said, "I've lost the thing!
No matter! I can quote it;
And here's the pen," and she raised her wing,
"With which Lord Swansdown wrote it.

"Of course you never heard of me,
As I'm rather below your station;
But a lady famed like yourself, you see,
Is known to all creation."

Then to herself the old swan said,
"Such talk's not reprehensible;
Indeed, for a creature country-bred,
She's very shrewd and sensible."

Griselda saw how her flattery took,
And cried, on the silence breaking,
"You see I have the family look,
My neck there is no mistaking.

"It doesn't compare with yours; you know
I've a touch of the democracy;
While your style and manner plainly show
Your perfect aristocracy."

Such happy flattery did the thing:
Though the young swans doubtfully eyed her,
My Lady took her under her wing,
And kept her close beside her.

And Griselda tried at ease to appear,
And forget the home she had quitted ;
For she told herself she had reached a sphere
At last for which she was fitted.

Though she had some fits of common sense,
And at times grew quite dejected ;
For she wasn't deceived by her own pretense,
And she knew what others suspected.

If ever she went alone to stray,
Some pert young swan to tease her
Would ask, in a patronizing way,
If their poor home didn't please her?

Sometimes when a party went to sail
On the lake, in pleasant weather,
As if she was not within the pale,
She was left out altogether.

And then she would take a haughty tone,
As if she scorned them, maybe ;
But often she hid in the weeds alone,
And cried like a homesick baby.

One day when she had gone to her room,
With the plea that she was ailing,
They asked some rather gay birds to come
For the day, and try the sailing.

But they said, "She will surely hear the stir,
So we'll have to let her know it ;
Of course we are all ashamed of her,
But it will not do to show it."

So one of them went to her, and said,
With a sort of stately rustle :
"I suppose you would rather spare your head
Than join in our noise and bustle !

"If you wish to send the slightest excuse,
I'll be very happy to take it ;
And I hope you're not such a little goose
As to hesitate to make it !"

Too well Griselda understood ;
And said, "Though my pain's distressing,
I think the change will do me good,
And I do not mind the dressing."

'Twas the "little goose" that made her mad,
So mad she wouldn't refuse her ;
Though she saw from the first how very glad
Her friend would be to excuse her.

She had overdone the thing, poor swan !
As her ill success had shown her ;
Shot quite beyond the mark, and her gun
Recoiled and hit the owner.

“Don't you think,” she cried, “I've done my best ;
But as sure as I'm a sinner,
That little dowdy, frightfully dressed,
Is coming down to dinner !

“I tried in every way to show
That I thought it an impropriety ;
But I s'pose the creature doesn't know
The manners of good society !”

Griselda thought, “If it comes to that,
With the weapon she takes I'll meet her.
She's sharp, but I'll give her tit for tat,
And I think that I can beat her.”

So she came among them quite at ease,
By her very look contriving
To say, “I'm certain there's nothing could please
You so much as my arriving.”

And her friend contrived to whisper low,
As she made her genuflexion :
“A country cousin of ours, you know ;
A very distant connection !

“She hasn't much of an air, you see,
And is rather new to the city ;
Aunt took her up quite from charity,
And keeps her just from pity.”

But Griselda paid her, fair and square,
For all her sneers and scorning ;
And "the *fête* was quite a successful affair,"
So the papers said next morning.

And yet she cried at the close of day,
Till the lake almost ran over,
To think what a price she had to pay
To get into a sphere above her.

"Alas!" she said, "that our common sense
Should be lost when others flatter ;
I was born a goose, and no pretense
Will change or help the matter !"

At last she did nothing but mope and fret,
And think of effecting a clearance !
She got as low as a lady can get, —
She didn't regard her appearance !

She got her pretty pink slippers soiled
By wearing them out in bad weather ;
And as for her feathers, they were not oiled
Sometimes for a week together.

Had she seen just how to bring it about,
She would have left in a minute ;
But she found it was harder getting out
Of trouble than getting in it.

She looked down at the fish with envious eyes,
Because each mother's daughter,
Content in her element, never tries
To keep her head above water !

She wished she was by some good luck,
Turned into a salmon finny ;
Into a chicken, or into a duck :
She wished herself in Guinea.

One day the Keeper came to the lake,
And if he didn't dissemble,
She saw that to her he meant to take,
In a way that made her tremble.

With a chill of fear her feathers shook,
Although to her friend she boasted
He had such a warm, admiring look,
That she feared she should be roasted ;

And that for very modesty's sake,
Since nothing else could shield her,
She would go to the other end of the lake,
And stay till the night concealed her.

So, taking no leave, she stole away,
And nobody cared or missed her ;
But the geese on the pond were surprised, next day,
By the sight of their missing sister.

She told them she strayed too far and got lost ;
And though being from home had pained her,
Some wealthy friends that she came across,
Against her will detained her.

But it leaked from the lake, or a bird of the air
Had carried to them the matter ;
For even before her, her story was there,
And they all looked doubtfully at her.

Poor Griselda ! unprotected, alone,
By their slights and sneers was nettled ;
For all the friends that her youth had known
Were respectably married and settled ;

Or all but one, — a poor old coot,
That she used to scorn for a lover ;
He was shabbier now, and had lost a foot,
That a cart-wheel had run over.

But she said, “ There is but one thing to be done
For stopping sneers and slanders ;
For a lame excuse is better than none,
And so is the lamest of ganders ! ”

So she married him, but do you know,
They did not cease to flout her ;
For she somehow couldn't make it go
With herself, nor those about her.

They spoke of it with scornful lip,
Though they didn't exactly drop her ;
As if 'twas a limited partnership,
And not a marriage proper.

And yet in truth I'm bound to say
Her state was a little better ;
Though I heard her friend say yesterday
To another one, who met her, —

“Oh, I saw old Gristle Goose to-night, —
Of course I did not seek it ;
I suppose she is really Mrs. White,
Though it sticks in my crop to speak it !”





THE ROBIN'S NEST.

JENNY BROWN had as pretty a house of her own
As ever a bird need to want, I should think ;
And the sheltering vine that about it had grown,
Half hid it in green leaves and roses of pink.



As she never looked shabby, or seemed out of date,
It was surely enough, though she had but one
dress ;
And Robin, the fellow she took for her mate,
Was quite constant — that is, for a Robin, I guess.

Jenny Brown had four birdies, the cunningest things
That ever peeped back to a mother-bird's call ;
That only could flutter their soft downy wings,
And open their mouths to take food — that was all.

Now I dare say you think she was happy and gay,
And she was almost always contented ; but yet,
Though I know you will hardly believe what I say,
Sometimes she would ruffle her feathers and fret.

One day, tired of flying about in the heat,
She came home in her crossest and sulkiest mood ;
And though she brought back not a morsel to eat,
She pecked little Robin for crying for food.

Just then Robin came and looked in through the
trees,
And saw with a quick glance that all was not
right,
But he sung out as cheerful and gay as you please :
“ Why, Jenny, dear Jenny, how are you to-night ? ”

It made her more angry to see him so calm,
While she suffered all that a bird could endure ;
And she answered, “ ‘ How am I ? ’ who cares how
I am ?

It isn't you, Robin, for one, I am sure !

“ You know I've been tied here day in and day out,
Till I'm tired almost of my home and my life,

While you — you go carelessly roving about,
And singing to every one else but your wife."

Then Robin replied: "Little reason you've got
To complain of me, Jenny; wherever I roam
I still think of you, and your quieter lot,
And wish 'twas my place to stay here at home.

"And as to my singing, I give you my word,
'Tis in concert, and always in public, beside;
For excepting yourself, there is no lady-bird
Knows the softest and lovingest notes I have tried.

"And, Jenny," — and here he spoke tenderly quite,
As with head drooped aside he drew nearer and
stood, —

"I heard some sad news as I came home to-night,
About our poor neighbors that live in the wood.

"You know Nelly Jay, that wild, thoughtless young
thing,
Who takes in her children and home no delight,
But early and late is abroad on the wing,
To chatter and gossip from morning till night, —

"Well, yesterday, just after noon, she went out,
And stayed till the sun had gone down in the
west;
Complaining to some of her friends, I've no doubt,
Of the trouble she had taking care of her nest;

“And her sweet little Nelly, — you’ve seen her, my dear,

The brightest and sprightliest bird of them all,
The age of our Jenny, I think, very near,
Tumbled out of the nest and was killed by the fall.

“I saw the poor thing lying stiff on the ground,
With its little wing broke and the film o’er its eyes,

While the mother was flying distractedly round
And startling the wood with her piteous cries.

“As I stopped, just to say a kind, comforting word,
I thought how my own home was guarded and blessed ;

For, Jenny, my darling, my beauty, my bird,
I knew I should find you content in the nest !

“And how are our birdies? — the dear little things ;
How softly and snugly asleep they are laid ;
But don’t fold them quite so close under your wings,
Or you’ll kill them with kindness, my pet, I’m afraid.

“And, Jenny, I’ll stay with them now, — nay, I must,
While you go out a moment, and take the fresh air ;

You sit here too much by yourself, I mistrust,
And are quite overburdened with work and with care.

“What, you don't want to go! you want nothing so long

As your dear little ones and your Robin are here?
Then I'll stay with you, Jenny, and sing the old song

I sang when I courted you — shall I, my dear?”





RAIN AND SUNSHINE.

I WAS out in the country
To feel the sweet spring,
I was out in the country
To hear the birds sing ;
To bask in the sunshine,
Breathe air pure and sweet,
And walk where the blossoms
Grew under my feet.

So at morning I woke
While my chamber was dark,
And was up — or I should have been —
Up with the lark,
Only no lark was rising ;
And never a throat
Of bird since the morning
Had uttered a note.

It was raining, and sadly
I gazed on the skies,
Saying, " Nothing is left us
To gladden our eyes ;

And no pleasanter sound
Than this drip on the pane !”
When I caught a soft patter
That was not the rain.

First I heard the light falling
Of feet on the stair,
Then the voice of a child
Ringing clear through the air,
And with eyes wide awake,
And curls tumbled about,
Came Freddy, the darling,
With laugh and with shout.

No longer we heeded
The rain or the gloom ;
His smile, like the sunshine,
Illumined the room ;
We missed not the birds
While his glad voice was nigh :
His lips were our roses,
His eyes were our sky.

Sweet pet of the household,
And hope of each heart,
God keep thee, dear Freddy,
As pure as thou art,
And make thee, when changes
And sorrows shall come,
The comfort and sweetness
And sunshine of home !



BABY'S RING.

MOTHER's quite distracted,
Sister's in despair ;
All the household is astir,
Searching everywhere.
Every nook must be explored,
Every corner scanned —
Baby's lost the tiny ring
From her little hand.

Surely never such a babe
Made a mother glad ;
Never such a dainty hand
Any baby had !
Smallest ring was ever made
Off her finger slips ;
She should have a fairy's ring
For such rosy tips.

When she comes to womanhood,
If she keeps so fair,
She will surely wear the ring
Maidens love to wear :
And lest she should lose it then,
(She'll be wise and deep)
She will give to somebody
Ring and hand to keep.



DON'T GIVE UP.

IF you tried and have not won,
Never stop for crying ;
All that 's great and good is done
Just by patient trying.

Though young birds, in flying, fall,
Still their wings grow stronger ;
And the next time they can keep
Up a little longer.

Though the sturdy oak has known
Many a blast that bowed her,
She has risen again, and grown
Loftier and prouder.

If by easy work you beat,
Who the more will prize you ?
Gaining victory from defeat,
That's the test that tries you !





THE GOOD LITTLE SISTER.

THAT was a bitter winter
When Jenny was four years old,
And lived in a lonely farm-house —
Bitter, and long, and cold.

The crops had been a failure —
In the barns there was room to spare ;
And Jenny's hard-working father
Was full of anxious care.

Neither his wife nor children
Knew lack of fire or bread ;
They had whatever was needful,
Were sheltered, and clothed, and fed.

But the mother, alas ! was ailing —
'Twas a struggle just to live ;
And they scarce had even hopeful words,
Or cheerful smiles to give.

A good, kind man was the father,
He loved his girls and boys ;
But he whose hands are his riches
Has little for gifts and toys.

So when it drew near the season
That makes the world so glad —
When Jenny knew 'twas the time for gifts,
Her childish heart was sad.

For she thought, "I shall get no present
When Christmas comes, I am sure ;"
Ah ! the poor man's child learns early
Just what it means to be poor.

Yet still on the holy even
As she sat by the hearth-stone bright,
And her sister told good stories,
Her heart grew almost light.

For the hopeful skies of childhood
Are never quite o'ercast ;
And she said, "Who knows but somehow,
Something will come at last !"

So, before she went to her pillow,
Her pretty stockings were tied
Safely together, and slyly hung,
Close to the chimney side.

There was little room for hoping,
One would say who had lived more years ;
Yet the faith of the child is wiser
Sometimes than our doubts and fears.

The Good Little Sister.

Jenny had a good little sister,
Very big to her childish eyes,
Who was womanly, sweet, and patient,
And kind as she was wise.

And she had thought of this Christmas,
And the little it could bring,
Ever since the crops were half destroyed
By the freshet in the spring.

So the sweetest nuts of the autumn
She had safely hidden away ;
And the ripest and reddest apples
Hoarded for many a day.

And last she mixed some seed-cakes
(Jenny was sleeping then),
And moulded them grotesquely,
Like birds, and beasts, and men.

Then she slipped them into the stockings,
And smiled to think about
The joyful wonder of her pet,
When she found and poured them out.

And you couldn't have seen next morning
A gladder child in the land
Than that humble farmer's daughter,
With her simple gifts in her hand.

And the loving sister? ah! you know
How blesséd 'tis to give;
And they who think of others most
Are the happiest folks that live!

She had done what she could, my children,
To brighten that Christmas-day;
And whether her heart or Jenny's
Was lightest, 'tis hard to say.

And this, if you have but little,
Is what I would say to you:
Make all you can of that little—
Do all the good you can do.

And though your gifts may be humble,
Let no little child, I pray,
Find only an empty stocking
On the morn of the Christmas-day!

'Tis years and years since that sister
Went to dwell with the just;
And over her body the roses
Blossom and turn to dust.

And Jenny's a happy woman,
With wealth enough and to spare;
And every year her lap is filled
With presents fine and rare.

The Good Little Sister.

But whenever she thanks the givers
For favors great and small,
She thinks of the good little sister
Who gave her more than they all!





NOW.

IF something waits, and you should now
Begin and go right through it,
Don't think, if 'tis put off a day,
You'll not mind to do it.

Waste not moments, no nor words,
In telling what you could do
Some other time; the present is
For doing what you should do.

Don't do right unwillingly,
And stop to plan and measure;
'Tis working with the heart and soul,
That makes our duty pleasure.





THE CHICKEN'S MISTAKE.

A LITTLE downy chicken one day
Asked leave to go on the water,
Where she saw a duck with her brood at play,
Swimming and splashing about her.

Indeed, she began to peep and cry,
When her mother wouldn't let her :
"If the ducks can swim there, why can't I ;
Are they any bigger or better?"

Then the old hen answered, "Listen to me,
And hush your foolish talking ;
Just look at your feet, and you will see
They were only made for walking."

But chicky wistfully eyed the brook,
And didn't half believe her,
For she seemed to say, by a knowing look,
"Such stories couldn't deceive her."

And as her mother was scratching the ground,
She muttered lower and lower,
"I know I can go there and not be drowned,
And so I think I'll show her."

Then she made a plunge, where the stream was deep,
And saw too late her blunder ;
For she hadn't hardly time to peep
Till her foolish head went under.

And now I hope her fate will show
The child, my story reading,
That those who are older sometimes know
What you will do well in heeding,

That each content in his place should dwell,
And envy not his brother ;
And any part that is acted well,
Is just as good as another.

For we all have our proper sphere below,
And this is a truth worth knowing.
You will come to grief if you try to go
Where you never were made for going !





EFFIE'S REASONS.

TELL me, Effie, while you are sitting,
Cosily beside me here,
Talking all about your brothers,
Which you like the best, my dear.

“Tom is good sometimes,” said Effie,
“Good as any boy can be ;
But at other times he doesn’t
Seem to care a bit for me.

“Half the days he will not help me,
Though the way to school is rough ;
Nor assist me with my lessons,
When he knows them well enough.

“But, of course, I love him dearly —
He’s a brother like the rest,

Though I know he's not the best one ;
And I do not love him best.

“ Now there 's Charlie, my big brother,
Oh ! he 's always just as kind !
All day I may ask him questions,
And he doesn't seem to mind.

“ He with every lesson helps me,
And he 's sure to take my part ;
So I think I ought to love him —
And I do with all my heart.

“ But there 's cunning little Neddy —
Well, he 's not so *awful* good ;
But he never seems to mean it
When he answers cross or rude.

“ Sometimes, half in fun, he strikes me,
Just, I mean, a little blow ;
But he'd never, never do it
If he thought it hurt, I know.

“ Then again he 's nice and pleasant,
Coaxing me and kissing me ;
When he wants to ask a favor,
He 's as good as he can be.

“ He can't help me with my lessons,
He has hardly learned to spell ;

Effie's Reasons.

But in everything I help him,
And I like it just as well.

“He is never good as Charlie ;
Naughtier oft than Tom, I know ;
But for all that I love him,
Just because I love him so !”





FEATHERS.

You restless, curious little Jo,
I have told you all the stories I know,
 Written in poem or fable ;
I have turned them over, and let you look
At everything like a picture-book
 Upon my desk or table.

I think it's enough to drive one wild
To be shut up with a single child,
 And try for a day to please her.
Oh, dear me! what does a mother do,
Especially one who lives in a shoe,
 And has a dozen to tease her ?

“Aha! I've found the very thing,”
I cried, as I saw the beautiful wing
 Of a bird, and I said demurely :
“Now, if you'll be good the rest of the day,
I'll give you a bird with which to play ;
 You know what a bird is, surely ?

“Oh, yes!” and she opened wide her eyes,
“A bird is alive, and sings and flies ;”
 Then, folding her hands together,

She archly shook her wise little head,
And, looking very innocent, said,
“I know a bird from a feather!”

Well! of all the smart things uttered yet
By a baby three years old, my pet!

It's enough to frighten your mother.
Why, I've seen women — yes, and men,
Who had lived for threescore years and ten,
Who didn't know one from the other!

Now there is Kitty, past sixteen —
The one with the soldier beau, I mean —

When he makes his bayonet rattle,
And acts so bravely on parade,
She thinks he wouldn't be afraid
In the very front of battle.

But yet, if I were allowed to guess,
I should say her soldier was all in the dress,
And you'll find my guess is the right one.
If ever he has to meet the foe,
The first, and only feather he'll show
That day will be a white one.

There's Mrs. Pie, in her gorgeous plumes:
Why, half the folks who visit her rooms,
Because she is dressed so finely
And holds herself at the highest price,
Pronounce her a bird of paradise,
And say she sings divinely;

While many a one, with a sweeter lay,
Because her feathers are plain and gray,
The world's approval misses,
And only gets its scorn and abuse ;
She is called a failure, and called a goose,
And her song is met with hisses.

Men will stick as many plumes on their head
As an Indian chief who has bravely shed
The blood of a hostile nation,
When all the killing they've done or seen
Was killing themselves — that is, I mean
In the public estimation.

When Tom to his pretty wife was wed,
"She 's fuss and feathers," people said,
That any woman could borrow ;
And sure enough, her feathers fell,
Though the fuss was the genuine article,
As Tom has found to his sorrow.

When Mrs. Butterfly, who was a grub,
First got her wings, she was such a snob,
She scorned the folks around her,
And made, as she said, the feathers fly ;
But when she fell, she had gone so high,
She was smashed as flat as a flounder.

Alas, alas ! my little Jo,
I'm sorry to tell it, and sorry it 's so ;
But as to deceiving, I scorn to.

And I only hope that when you are grown
You will keep the wonderful wisdom you've shown,
Nor lose the wit you were born to.

But whether folks, so wise when they're small,
Can ever live to grow up at all,

Is one of the doubtful whethers.
I'm sure it happens but seldom, though,
Or there wouldn't be so many, you know,
Who can't tell birds from feathers.





THE PRAIRIE ON FIRE.

THE long grass burned brown
In the summer's fierce heat,
Snaps brittle and dry
'Neath the traveller's feet,
As over the prairie,
Through all the long day,
His white, tent-like wagon
Moves slow on its way.

Safe and snug with the goods
Are the little ones stowed,
And the big boys trudge on
By the team in the road ;
While his sweet, patient wife,
With the babe on her breast,
Sees their new home in fancy,
And longs for its rest.

But hark ! in the distance
That dull, trampling tread ;
And see how the sky
Has grown suddenly red !
What has lighted the west
At the hour of noon ?

The Prairie on Fire.

It is not the sunset,
It is not the moon!

The horses are rearing
And snorting with fear,
And over the prairie
Come flying the deer
With hot smoking haunches,
And eyes rolling back,
As if the fierce hunter
Were hard on their track.

The mother clasps closer
The babe on her arm,
While the children cling to her
In wildest alarm ;
And the father speaks low,
As the red light mounts higher :
“We are lost ! we are lost !
’Tis the prairie on fire !”

The boys, terror-stricken,
Stand still, all but one :
He has seen in a moment
The thing to be done ;
He has lighted the grass,
The quick flames leap in air ;
And the pathway before them
Lies blackened and bare.

How the fire-fiend behind
Rushes on in his power ;
But nothing is left
For his wrath to devour.
On the scarred smoking earth
They stand safe, every one,
While the flames in the distance
Sweep harmlessly on.

Then reverently under
The wide sky they kneel,
With spirits too thankful
To speak what they feel ;
But the father in silence
Is blessing his boy,
While the mother and children
Are weeping for joy.





DAPPLEDUN.

A LITTLE boy who, strange to say,
Was called by the name of John,
Once bought himself a little horse
To ride behind, and upon.

A handsomer beast you never saw,
He was so sleek and fat ;
“He has but a single fault,” said John,
“And a trifling one at that.”

His mane and tail grew thick and long,
He was quick to trot or run ;
His coat was yellow, flecked with brown ;
John called him Dappledun.

He never kicked and never bit ;
In harness well he drew ;
But this was the single foolish thing
That Dappledun would do.

He ran in clover up to his knees,
His trough was filled with stuff ;
Yet he'd jump the neighbor's fence, and act
As if he hadn't enough.

If he only could have been content
With his feed of oats and hay,
Poor headstrong, foolish Dappledun
Had been alive to-day.

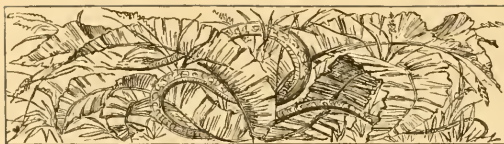
But one night when his rack was filled
With what he ought to eat,
He thrust his nose out of his stall,
And into a bin of wheat.

And there he ate, and ate, and ate,
And when he reached the tank
Where Johnny watered him next morn,
He drank, and drank, and drank.

And when that night John carried him
The sweet hay from the rick,
He lay and groaned, and groaned, and groaned,
For Dappledun was sick.

And when another morning came
And John rose from his bed
And went to water Dappledun,
Poor Dappledun was dead!





SUPPOSE!

SUPPOSE, my little lady,
Your doll should break her head,
Could you make it whole by crying
Till your eyes and nose are red?
And wouldn't it be pleasanter
To treat it as a joke;
And say you're glad "'Twas Dolly's
And not your head that broke?"

Suppose you're dressed for walking,
And the rain comes pouring down,
Will it clear off any sooner
Because you scold and frown?
And wouldn't it be nicer
For you to smile than pout,
And so make sunshine in the house
When there is none without?

Suppose your task, my little man,
Is very hard to get,
Will it make it any easier
For you to sit and fret?
And wouldn't it be wiser,
Than waiting like a dunce,

- To go to work in earnest
And learn the thing at once ?

Suppose that some boys have a horse,
And some a coach and pair,
Will it tire you less while walking
To say, " It isn't fair ?"
And wouldn't it be nobler
To keep your temper sweet,
And in your heart be thankful
You can walk upon your feet ?

And suppose the world don't please you,
Nor the way some people do,
Do you think the whole creation
Will be altered just for you ?
And isn't it, my boy or girl,
The wisest, bravest plan,
Whatever comes, or doesn't come,
To do the best you can ?





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,
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 travelling 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.





EASY LESSONS.

COME, little children, come with me,
Where the winds are singing merrily,
As they toss the crimson clover ;
We'll walk on the hills and by the brooks,
And I'll show you stories in prettier books
Than the ones you are poring over.

Do you think you could learn to sing a song,
Though you drummed and hummed it all day long,
Till hands and brains were aching,
That would match the clear, untutored notes
That drop from the pretty, tender throats
Of birds, when the day is breaking ?

Did you ever read, on any page,
Though written with all the wisdom of age,
And all the truth of preaching,
Any lesson that taught you so plain
Content with your humble work and gain,
As the golden bee is teaching ?

For see, as she floats on her airy wings,
How she sings and works, and works and sings,
Never stopping nor staying ;

Showing us clearly what to do
To make of duty a pleasure, too,
And to make our work but playing.

Do you suppose that a book can tell
Maxims of prudence, half so well
As the little ant, who is telling
To man, as she patiently goes and comes,
Bearing her precious grains and crumbs,
How want is kept from the dwelling?

Whatever a story can teach to you
Of the good a little thing may do,
The hidden brook is showing,
Whose quiet way is only seen
Because of its banks, so fresh and green,
And the flowers beside it growing.

If we go where the golden lily grows,
Where, clothed in raiment fine, she glows
Like a king in all his glory,
And ponder over each precious leaf,
We shall find there, written bright and brief,
The words of a wondrous story.

We shall learn the beautiful lesson there
That our Heavenly Father's loving care,
Even the lily winneth;
For rich in beauty thus she stands,
Arrayed by his gracious, tender hands,
Though she toileth not, nor spinneth.

There isn't a blossom under our feet,
But has some teaching, short and sweet,
That is richly worth the knowing ;
And the roughest hedge, or the sharpest thorn,
Is blest with a power to guard or warn,
If we will but heed its showing.

So do not spoil your happy looks
By poring always over your books,
Written by scholars and sages ;
For there's many a lesson in brooks or birds,
Told in plainer and prettier words
Than those in your printed pages.

And yet, I would not have you think
No wisdom comes through pen and ink,
And all books are dull and dreary ;
For not all of life can be pleasant play,
Nor every day a holiday,
And tasks must be hard and weary.

And that is the very reason why
I would have you learn from earth and sky
Their lessons of good, and heed them :
For there our Father, with loving hand,
Writes truths that a child may understand,
So plain that a child can read them.



OBEDIENCE.

IF you're told to do a thing,
And mean to do it really ;
Never let it be by halves ;
Do it fully, freely !

Do not make a poor excuse,
Waiting, weak, unsteady ;
All obedience worth the name,
Must be prompt and ready.



THE CROW'S CHILDREN.



A HUNTSMAN, bearing
his gun a-field,
Went whistling merrily ;
When he heard the
blackest of black crows
Call out from a withered
tree :—

“ You are going to kill the
thievish birds,
And I would if I were you ;
But you musn't touch my
family,
Whatever else you do ! ”

“ I'm only going to kill the
birds
That are eating up my
crop ;
And if your young ones do
such things,
Be sure they'll have to
stop. ”

“ Oh, ” said the crow, “ my
children
Are the best ones ever born ;

There isn't one among them all
Would steal a grain of corn. ”

“But how shall I know which ones they are?

Do they resemble you?”

“Oh no,” said the crow, “they’re the prettiest birds,

And the whitest that ever flew!”

So off went the sportsman, whistling,

And off, too, went his gun;

And its startling echoes never ceased

Again till the day was done.

And the old crow sat untroubled,

Cawing away in her nook;

For she said, “He’ll never kill my birds,

Since I told him how they look.

“Now there’s the hawk, my neighbor,

She’ll see what she will see, soon;

And that saucy, whistling blackbird

May have to change his tune!”

When, lo! she saw the hunter

Taking his homeward track,

With a string of crows as long as his gun,

Hanging down his back.

“Alack, alack!” said the mother,

“What in the world have you done?

You promised to spare my pretty birds,

And you’ve killed them every one.”

The Crow's Children.

"Your birds!" said the puzzled hunter;

"Why, I found them in my corn;
And besides, they are black and ugly
As any that ever were born!"

"Get out of my sight, you stupid!"

Said the angriest of crows;

"How good and fair her children are,
There's none but a parent knows!"

"Ah! I see, I see," said the hunter,

"But not as you do, quite;
It takes a mother to be so blind
She can't tell black from white!"





HIVES AND HOMES.

WHEN March has gone with his cruel wind,
That frightens back the swallow,
And the pleasant April sun has shined
Out through her showery clouds, we find
Pale blooms in the wood and hollow.

But after the darling May awakes,
Bedecked with flowers like a fairy ;
About the meadows and streams and lakes

She drops them every step she takes,
For she has too many to carry.

And when June has set in the leafy trees
Her bird-tunes all a ringing,
Wherever a blossom nods in the breeze
The good, contented, cheerful bees
Are found at work and singing.

Ah, the wise little bees! they know how to live,
Each one in peace with his neighbor ;
For though they dwell in a narrow hive,
They never seem too thick to thrive,
Nor so many they spoil their labor.

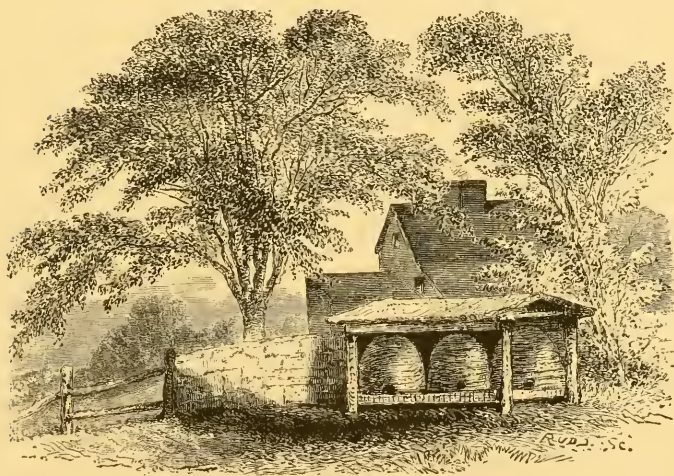
And well may they sing a pleasant tune,
Since their life has such completeness ;
Their hay is made in the sun of June,
And every moon is a honeymoon,
And home a home of sweetness.

The golden belts they wear each day
Are lighter than belts of money ;
And making work as pleasant as play,
The stings of life they give away,
And only keep the honey.

They are teaching lessons, good and true,
To each idle drone and beauty,
And, my youthful friends, if any of you

Should think (though, of course, you never do)
Of love, and home, and duty —

And yet it often happens, you know,
True to the very letter,
That youths and maidens, when they grow,
Swarm off from the dear old hive and go
To another, for worse or better!



So you'd better learn that this life of ours
Is not all show and glitter,
And skillfully use your noblest powers
To suck the sweets from its poison flowers,
And leave behind the bitter.

But wherever you stay, or wherever you roam,
In the days while you live in clover,
You should gather your honey and bring it home,
Because the winter will surely come,
When the summer of life is over.





NORA'S CHARM.

'Twas the fisher's wife at her neighbor's door,
And she cried, as she wrung her hands,
"O Nora, get your cloak and hood,
And haste with me o'er the sands."

Now a kind man was the fisherman,
And a lucky man was he ;
And never a steadier sailed away
From the Bay of Cromarty.

And the wife had plenty on her board,
And the babe in her arms was fair ;
But her heart was always full of fear,
And her brow was black with care.

And she stood at her neighbor's door and cried,
"Oh, woe is me this night !
For the fairies have stolen my pretty babe,
And left me an ugly sprite.

"My pretty babe, that was more than all
The wealth of the world to me ;
With his coral lips, and his hair of gold,
And his teeth like pearls of the sea !

“ I went to look for his father's boat,
When I heard the stroke of the oar ;
And I left him cooing soft in his bed,
As the bird in her nest by the door.

“ And there was the father fair in sight,
And pulling hard to the land ;
And my foot was back o'er the sill again,
Ere his keel had struck the sand.

“ But the fairies had time to steal my babe,
And leave me in his place
A restless imp, with a wicked grin,
And never a smile on his face.”

And Nora took her cloak and hood,
And softly by the hand
She led the fisher's wife through the night,
Across the yellow sand.

“ Nay do not rave, and talk so wild ;”
'Twas Nora thus that spoke ;
“ We must have our wits to work against
The arts of fairy folk.

“ There's a charm to help us in our need,
But its power we cannot try,
With the black cloud hanging o'er the brow,
And the salt tear in the eye.

“ For wicked things may gibe and grin
With noisy jeer and shout ;
But the joyous peal of a happy laugh
Has power to drive them out.

“ And if this sprite we can but please,
Till he laughs with merry glee,
We shall break the spell that holds him here,
And keeps the babe from your knee.”

So the mother wiped her tears away,
And patiently and long
They plied the restless, stubborn imp
With cunning trick and song.

They blew a blast on the fisher's horn,
Each curious prank they tried ;
They rocked the cradle where he lay,
As a boat is rocked on the tide.

But there the hateful creature kept,
In place of the human child ;
And never once his writhings ceased,
And never once he smiled.

Then Nora cried, ‘ Take yonder egg
That lies upon the shelf,
And make of it two hollow cups,
Like tiny cups of delf.”

And the mother took the sea-mew's egg,
And broke in twain the shell,
And made of it two tiny cups,
And filled them at the well.

She filled them up as Nora bade,
And set them on the coals :
And the imp grew still, for he ne'er had seen
In fairy land such bowls.

And when the water bubbled and boiled,
Like a fountain in its play,
Mirth bubbled up to his lips, and he laughed
Till he laughed himself away !

And the mother turned about, and felt
The heart in her bosom leap ;
For the imp was gone, and there in his place
Lay her baby fast asleep.

And Nora said to her neighbor, " Now
There sure can be no doubt
But a merry heart and a merry laugh
Drive evil spirits out !

" And who can say but the dismal frown
And the doleful sigh are the sin
That keeps the good from our homes and hearts,
And lets the evil in ! "



THEY DIDN'T THINK.

ONCE a trap was baited
With a piece of cheese ;
It tickled so a little mouse
It almost made him sneeze ;
An old rat said, " There's danger,
Be careful where you go !"
" Nonsense !" said the other,
" I don't think you know !"
So he walked in boldly —
Nobody in sight ;
First he took a nibble,
Then he took a bite ;
Close the trap together
Snapped as quick as wink,
Catching mousey fast there,
'Cause he didn't think.

Once a little turkey,
Fond of her own way,
Wouldn't ask the old ones
Where to go or stay ;
She said, " I'm not a baby,
Here I am half-grown ;

They Didn't Think.

Surely I am big enough
To run about alone!"
Off she went, but somebody
Hiding saw her pass;
Soon like snow her feathers
Covered all the grass.
So she made a supper
For a sly young mink,
'Cause she was so headstrong
That she wouldn't think.

Once there was a robin
Lived outside the door,
Who wanted to go inside
And hop upon the floor.
"Ho, no," said the mother,
"You must stay with me;
Little birds are safest
Sitting in a tree."
"I don't care," said Robin,
And gave his tail a fling,
"I don't think the old folks
Know quite everything."
Down he flew, and Kitty seized him,
Before he'd time to blink.
"Oh," he cried, "I'm sorry,
But I didn't think."

Now, my little children,
You who read this song,

Don't you see what trouble
Comes of thinking wrong?
And can't you take a warning
From their dreadful fate
Who began their thinking
When it was too late?
Don't think there's always safety
Where no danger shows,
Don't suppose you know more
Than anybody knows;
But when you're warned of ruin,
Pause upon the brink,
And don't go under headlong,
'Cause you didn't think.





AJAX.

OLD Ajax was a faithful dog,
Of the best and bravest sort ;
And we made a friend and pet of him,
And called him " Jax," for short.
He served us well for many a year,
But at last there came a day
When, a superannuated dog,
In the sun he idly lay.

And though as kindly as before
He still was housed and fed,
We brought a younger, sprightlier dog
For service in his stead.
Poor " Jax!" he knew and felt it all,
As well as you or I ;
He laid his head on his trembling paws,
And his whine was like a cry.

And then he rose : he would not stay
Near where the intruder stayed ;
He took the other side of the house,
Though that was in the shade.
And he never answered when we called,
He would not touch his bone ;

'Twas more than he could bear to have
A rival near his throne.

We tried to soothe his wounded pride
By every kindly art ;
But if ever creature did, poor "Jax"
Died of a broken heart.
Alas ! he would not learn the truth,
He was not still a pup ;
That every dog must have his day,
And then must give it up !





“KEEP A STIFF UPPER LIP!”

THERE has something gone wrong
My brave boy, it appears,
For I see your proud struggle
To keep back the tears.
That is right. When you cannot
Give trouble the slip,
Then bear it, still keeping
“A stiff upper lip!”

Though you cannot escape
Disappointment and care,
The next best thing to do
Is to learn how to bear.
If when for life's prizes
You're running, you trip,
Get up, start again —
“Keep a stiff upper lip!”

Let your hands and your conscience
Be honest and clean ;
Scorn to touch or to think of
The thing that is mean ;
But hold on to the pure
And the right with firm grip,

And though hard be the task,
"Keep a stiff upper lip!"

Through childhood, through manhood,
Through life to the end,
Struggle bravely and stand
By your colors, my friend.
Only yield when you must ;
Never "give up the ship,"
But fight on to the last
"With a stiff upper lip."





WHAT THE FROGS SING.

“ I’VE got such a cold I cannot sing,”
Said a bull-frog living close to the spring, —
“ And it keeps me all the time so hoarse,
That my voice is very base of course.
I hate to live in this nasty bog ;
It isn’t fit for a decent frog :
Now there’s that bird, just hear the note
So soft and sweet, from out her throat,”
He said, as a thrush in the tree above
Was trilling her liquid song of love :
“ And what pretty feathers on her back,
While mine is mottled, yellow and black ;
And then for moving she has her wings,
They must be very handy things ; —
And this all comes, as one may see,
Just from living up in a tree ;
She’d look as queer as I do, I’ll bet,
If she had to live down here in the wet,
And be as hoarse, if doomed to tramp
About all day where her feet got damp.
“ As the world is managed, I do declare,
Things do not seem exactly fair ;

For instance, here on the ground I lie,
While the bird lives up there, high and dry ;
Some frogs mayn't care, perhaps they don't,
But I can't stand such things and I won't ;
So I'll see if I can't make a rise.
Who knows what he can do till he tries?"

So this cunning frog he winked his eye,
He was lying low and playing sly ;
For he did not want the frogs about
To find his precious secret out :
But when they were all in the mud a-bed,
And the thrush in her wing had hid her head,
Then Mr. Bull his legs uncurled,
And began to take a start in the world.
'Twas from the foot of the tree to hop,
But how was he to reach the top ?
For it wasn't fun, as he learned in time,
To climb with feet not made to climb ;
And twenty times he fell on his head,
But he wouldn't give it up, he said,
For nobody saw him in the dark,
So he clutched once more at the scraggy bark,
And just as the stars were growing dim,
He sat and swung on the topmost limb ;
He was damp with sweat from foot to head ;
" Why it 's wet enough up here," he said,
" And I've been nicely fooled, I see,
In thinking it dry to live in a tree.

Why what with the rain, and with the dews,
I shall have more water than I can use!"
And so he sat there, gay as a grig,
And saw the sun rise bright and big;
And when he caught the thrush's note,
He, too, began to tune his throat;
But his style of music seemed to sound
Even worse than it did on the ground;
So all the frightened birds took wing,
And he felt, himself, that it wasn't the thing,
Though he said, "I don't believe what I've heard,
That a frog in a tree won't be a bird."

But soon the sun rose higher and higher,
And froggy's back got drier and drier.
Till he thought perhaps it might be better,
If the place was just a little wetter;
But when he felt the mid-day glare,
He said "high life was a poor affair!"
No wings on his back were coming out,
He didn't feel even a feather sprout;
He couldn't sing; and began to see
He was just a bull-frog up a tree;
But he feared the sneers of his friends in the bog,
For he was proud as any other frog;
And he knew, if they saw him coming down,
He would be the laugh and jest of the town.
So he waited there, while his poor dry back
Seemed burning up, and ready to crack,

His yellow sides looked pale and dim,
And his eyes with tears began to swim,
And he said, "You learn when you come to roam,
That nature is nature, and home is home."

And when at last the sun was gone,
And the shadows cool were stealing on,
With many a slow and feeble hop
He got himself away from the top ;
He reached the trunk, and then with a bound
He landed safely on the ground,
And managed back to the spring to creep,
While all his friends were fast asleep.
Next morning, those who were sitting near,
Saw that he looked a little queer,
So they asked, hoping to have some fun,
Where he had been, and what he had done.
Now, though our hero scorned to lie,
He thought he had a right to be sly ;
For, said he, if the fellows find me out,
I'd better have been "up the spout."
So he told them he'd been *very dry*,
And, to own the truth, *got rather high!*

Then all the frogs about the spring
Began at once this song to sing :
First high it rose, and then it sunk : —
"A frog-got-drunk-got-drunk-got-drunk —
We'll-search-the-spring-for-his-whiskey-jug --
Ka-chee, ka-chi, ka-cho, ka-chug !"

And my story's true, as you may know,
For still the bull-frogs sing just so ;
But that Mr. Bull was up a tree,
There's nobody knows but himself and me.





THE HUNCHBACK.

IF he walked he could not keep beside
The lads that were straight and well ;
And yet, poor boy, how hard he tried,
There 's none of us can tell.
To get himself in trim for school
Was weary work, and slow ;
And once his thoughtless brother said,
“ You're never ready, Joe ! ”

He sat in the sun, against the wall,
When the rest were blithe and gay ;
For he could not run and catch the ball
Nor join in the noisy play.
And first or last he would not share
In a quarrel or a fight ;
But he was prompt enough to say,
“ No, boys, it isn't right ! ”

And when a lad o'er a puzzling “ sum ”
Perplexed his head in doubt,
Poor little, patient, hunchbacked Joe,
Could always help him out.
And surely as the time came round
To read, define, and spell,

The Hunchback.

Poor little Joe was ready first,
And knew his lessons well.

And not a child in Sunday-school
Was half so quick as he,
To tell who blessed the children once
And took them on his knee.
And if you could but draw him out,
'Twas good to hear him talk
Of Him who made the blind to see
And caused the lame to walk.

When sick upon his bed he lay,
He uttered no complaint ;
For scarce in patient gentleness
Was he behind a saint.
And when the summons came, that soon
Or late must come to all,
Poor little, happy, hunchbacked Joe,
Was ready for the call.





THE ENVIOUS WREN.

ON the ground lived a hen,
In a tree lived a wren,
Who picked up her food here and there ;
While bidy had wheat
And all nice things to eat.
Said the wren, "I declare, 't isn't fair !"

"It is really too bad"
She exclaimed — she was mad —
"To go out when it is raining this way !
And to earn what you eat,
Doesn't make your food sweet,
In spite of what some folks may say.

"Now there is that hen,"
Said this cross little wren,
"She's fed till she's fat as a drum ;
While I strive and sweat
For each bug that I get,
And nobody gives me a crumb.

"I can't see for my life
Why the old farmer's wife

Treats her so much better than me ;
Suppose on the ground
I hop carelessly round
For a while, and just see what I'll see."

Said this 'cute little wren,
"I'll make friends with the hen,
And perhaps she will ask me to stay ;
And then upon bread
Every day I'd be fed,
And life would be nothing but play."

So down flew the wren.
"Stop to tea," said the hen ;
And soon biddy's supper was sent ;
But scarce stopping to taste,
The poor bird left in haste,
And this was the reason she went :

When the farmer's kind dame
To the poultry-yard came,
She said — and the wren shook with fright —
"Biddy's so fat she'll do
For a pie or a stew,
And I guess I shall kill her to-night."





THE HAPPY LITTLE WIFE.

“Now, Gudhand, have you sold the cow
You took this morn to town?
And did you get the silver groats
In your hand, paid safely down?”

“And yet I hardly need to ask ;
You hardly need to tell ;
For I see by the cheerful face you bring,
That you have done right well.”

“Well! I did not exactly sell her,
Nor give her away, of course ;
But I’ll tell you what I did, good wife,
I swappd her for a horse.”

“A horse! Oh, Gudhand, you have done
Just what will please me best,
For now we can have a carriage,
And ride as well as the rest.”

“Nay, not so fast, my good dame,
We shall not want a gig :
I had not ridden half a mile
Till I swappd my horse for a pig.”

“That ’s just the thing,” she answered,

“ I would have done myself :

We can have a flitch of bacon now

To put upon the shelf.

“ And when our neighbors come to dine

With us, they’ll have a treat ;

There is no need that we should ride,

But there is that we should eat.”

“ Alack ! alack ! ” said Gudhand,

“ I fear you’ll change your note,

When I tell you I haven’t got the pig —

I swapped him for a goat.”

“ Now, bless us ! ” cried the good wife,

“ You manage things so well ;

What I should ever do with a pig

I’m sure I cannot tell.

“ If I put my bacon on the shelf,

Or put it in the pot,

The folks would point at us and say

‘ They eat up all they’ve got ! ’

“ But a good milch goat, ah ! that’s the thing

I’ve wanted all my life ;

And now we’ll have both milk and cheese,”

Cried the happy little wife.

“Nay, not so fast,” said Gudhand,
“You make too long a leap ;
When I found I couldn’t drive my goat,
I swapped him for a sheep.”

“A sheep, my dear ! you must have tried
To suit me all the time ;
’Twould plague me so to have a goat,
Because the things will climb !

“But a sheep ! the wool will make us clothes
To keep us from the cold ;
Run out, my dear, this very night,
And build for him a fold.”

“Nay, wife, it isn’t me that cares
If he be penned or loose :
I do not own the sheep at all,
I swapped him for a goose.”

“There, Gudhand, I am so relieved ;
It almost made me sick
To think that I should have the wool
To clip, and wash, and pick !

“’Tis cheaper, too, to buy our clothes,
Than make them up at home ;
And I haven’t got a spinning-wheel,
Nor got a carding-comb.

The Happy Little Wife.

“ But a goose! I love the taste of goose,
When roasted nice and brown ;
And then we want a feather bed,
And pillows stuffed with down.”

“ Now stop a bit,” cried Gudhand,
“ Your tongue runs like a clock ;
The goose is neither here nor there,
I swapped him for a cock.”

“ Dear me, you manage everything
As I would have it done ;
We'll know now when to stir our stumps,
And rise before the sun.

“ A goose would be quite troublesome
For me to roast and stuff ;
And then our pillows and our beds
You know, are soft enough.”

“ Well, soft or hard,” said Gudhand,
“ I guess they'll have to do ;
And that we'll have to wake at morn,
Without the crowing, too !

“ For you know I couldn't travel
All day with naught to eat ;
So I took a shilling for my cock,
And bought myself some meat.”

“That was the wisest thing of all,”
Said the good wife, fond and true ;
“You do just after my own heart,
Whatever thing you do.

“We do not want a cock to crow,
Nor want a clock to strike ;
Thank God that we may lie in bed
As long now as we like !”

And then she took him by the beard
That fell about his throat,
And said, “ *While you are mine, I want
Nor goose, nor swine, nor goat !*”

And so the wife kissed Gudhand,
And Gudhand kissed his wife ;
And they promised to each other
To be all in all through life.



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