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THE SPRING WALK.

ORIGINAL POEMS

FOR MY CHILDREN.

BY THOMAS MILLER,

AUTHOR OF "PICTURES OF COUNTRY LIFE," "THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS," &c.



LONDON:
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GOD AND HIS ANGELS EVERYWHERE.

WE know that God is everywhere.
We see Him in the changing year,
Above, below, remote, or near.

And there His Angels are also ;
They ride on all the winds that blow,
And at His bidding come and go.

Unseen by us, that holy band
Speed night and day o'er sea and land,
Or in His presence waiting stand.

Some wake the morning from repose,
And scent the early Summer-rose,
Or tell the evening when to close.

They throw grey twilight o'er the hills,
 In Spring unloose the frozen rills,
 And shake the golden daffodils.

Some sow the dews upon the earth,
 Or anthem in the morning's birth,
 Teaching the birds their woodland mirth.

They light the stars across the skies,
 And tell the lark 't is time to rise,
 When they unlock the daisies' eyes.

They scatter cowslips on the dale,
 Perfume the lilies of the vale,
 And hang the thorn with blossoms pale.

Some twine the branches into bowers,
 Others at evening shut the flowers,
 And sprinkle them with silver showers.

Some guide the birds across the sea,
 Or point out to the belted bee
 Where honey-bells wave on the lea.

Alighting with half-folded wings,
 They bend the buds o'er brooks and springs,
 By which the linnet builds, and sings.

They scatter seeds upon the breeze,
 And hang with mellow fruit the trees,
 Obeying Him who all things sees,—

Keep record of our idle talk,
 Are with us when we sleep, or walk :
 And ever ready at His call,
 To keep a watch o'er great and small.—
 God's messengers, who love us all.



SUNDAY IN THE COUNTRY.

THE spotted horse is put away,
The hoop, and kite, and top, and ball ;
For 'tis the holy Sabbath day,
When Christians go to church, and pray
To God, who loveth all.

To-day the doll is put aside,
The story-books placed out of sight ;
For we must seek a holier guide,
And read how Christ the Saviour died
For us on Calvary's height.

The creaking waggon 's in the shed,
The busy flail is heard no more ;
The horse is littered down and fed,
The harness hangs above his head,
The whip behind the door.

His leathern gloves and hookëd bill
 To-day the woodman throws aside ;
 The blacksmith's fiery forge is still ;
 The wooden wheel of the old mill
 Sleeps in the mill-dam wide.

The miller's boat is anchored, where
 Far out, the water lilies sleep,
 You see their shadows mirrored there,
 The broad white flowers reflected clear
 Within the mill-pool deep.

The barrow 's in the garden shed,
 Hoe, rake, and spade, are put away ;
 Unweeded stands the onion bed,
 The gardener from his work hath fled,
 This holy Sabbath day.

Upon the wall the white cat sleeps,
 By which the churns and milk pans lie ;
 A drowsy watch the house-dog keeps,
 And scarcely from his dull eye peeps
 Upon the passer-by.

And sweetly over hill and dale
 The silvery-sounding church bells ring ;
 Across the moor and down the dale
 They come and go, and on the gale
 Their Sabbath tidings fling.

From where the whitewashed Sunday-school
 Peeps out between the poplars dim,
 Which ever throw their shadows cool
 Far out upon the rushy pool,
 You hear the Sabbath hymn.

From farm and field, and grange grown grey ;
From woodland walks and winding ways,
The old and young, the grave and gay,
Unto the old church come to pray,
And sing God's holy praise.

For the great God himself did say,
Thou shalt rest one day out of seven ;
And set apart that holy day
To worship Me, and sing, and pray,
If thou wouldst enter Heaven.





THE WATER-CRESS SELLER.

Now all aloud the wind and rain
Beat sharp upon the window-pane,
 And though 'tis hardly light,
I hear that little girl go by,
Who does "fine water-cresses" cry,
 Morning, and noon, and night.

I saw her pass by yesterday,
The snow upon the pavement lay,
 Her hair was white with sleet ;
She shook with cold, as she did cry,
" Fine water-cresses, come and buy,"
 And naked were her feet.

And with one hand, so red and cold,
She did her tattered bonnet hold,
 The other held her shawl,
Which was too thin to keep her warm,
But naked left each little arm,
 It was so very small.

SISTER MARTHA IN HEAVEN.

Her water-cresses froze together,
Yet she, through the cold, bitter weather,
Went on from street to street :
And thus she goes out every day,
For she can earn no other way
The bread which she doth eat.



SISTER MARTHA IN HEAVEN.

I KNOW my sister Martha's dead,
That weeping for her's all in vain ;
For mother dried my eyes, and said,
We all should meet again.

She told me how the grave but led
To a much happier land than ours ;
A land where summer never shed
Its ever-blooming flowers.

That sorrow never entered where
The star-paved floor of heaven lay ;
But angels ever waited there,
To wipe our tears away.

That Martha is an angel now,
And numbered with that seraph band,
Who in His presence ever bow,
Or sit on His right hand.

That high above she hymns His praise,
Tuning a harp with golden strings,
Or kneels amid a sun-like blaze,
Which gilds her face and wings.

That she hath now an angel's voice,
That on her brow a star doth shine ;
While she doth with the saints rejoice,
Before the Throne Divine.

I will no longer weep and sigh,
But night and morning bend my knee,
And pray to God that when I die
I may an angel be.





THE MOTHER TO HER INFANT.

SLUMBER, my darling, no danger is near,
Thy mother sits by thee to guard thy repose ;
Though the wind roars aloud, not a breath
reaches here,
To shake the white curtains which round thee
do close:
Then slumber, my darling, and sleep without
fear,
Thou art safe from all danger, my dearest, while
here.

What is it the angels do unto thee say,
When thou dost lie smiling so sweet in thy
sleep ?
Are they trying, my sweetest, to lure thee away,
And leave me alone in my sorrow to weep ?

Oh! sometimes I fancy they whisper thy name,
And would fain bear thee back to the land
whence they came.

Then never, my darling, when thou growest old,
Forget her who on thy sweet infancy smiled,
To whom thou wert dearer than jewels or gold,
Who studied thy looks and thy wishes, my
child,—

Who, when thou didst need her, was never away
In health or in sickness, by night or by day.



THE SEA-DEEPS.

DEEPER than the narwhal sinketh,
Deeper than the sea-horse drinketh,
There are miles, and miles of sea,
Where darkness reigns eternally.

Nor length of line, nor sounding lead
Have ever reached the deep sea-bed ;
Nor aught again beheld the light,
Which touched that land of endless night.
Above, a ship might strike and ground,
Below, no bottom could be found ;
Though o'er the rocks the white waves hiss,
Unfathomed lay the dark abyss :
Depths measureless—rocks that were hurled
From the foundations of the world.
Deeper than plummet e'er can go
Lie those grim endless depths below,
Which neither wind nor wave come near,
For all is dark and silent there.
Perchance, huge monsters, feed and sleep
Below that black and soundless deep,
Monsters of such weight and size,
That they have no power to rise.
The mighty Kraken, which they say,
Will heave up on that awful day,
When the last trumpet's startling sound
Shall pierce the inmost depths profound ;
He'll from the burning granite start,
And many a league of ocean part,
While his huge bulk he doth uprear,
And like an island vast appear.
Such monstrous things, they say, now sleep
Within the caverns of the deep.



MUSTARD SEED.

BEHOLD this ground! There's nothing here
Save earth;—nor has there been this year,
Grass, moss, nor flower, nor weed;
Yet in a week, here shall be seen
Your name, dear George, in leaves of green;
Springing from this round seed.

Now clear and plain before your sight,
In this dark mould your name I'll write.
There's every letter clear—
Now fill the lines with mustard seed—
Well done, a dunce your name might read,
So plain it doth appear.

Cover the seeds beneath this mould,
That looks so dark, and damp, and cold,
Until not one is seen.
And in a week, I dare be bound,
The name of GEORGE will here be found
In double leaves of green.

Though I can write your name in gold,
 And many a curl and flourish bold
 Around the letters throw :
 Were I a thousand years to try,
 To make a plant but one inch high,
 I could not make it grow.

When one short week had gone and past,
 The seed which in the earth George cast
 Rose up and bore his name.
 The plainest print could not be better,
 Up every stroke and every letter
 In double green leaves came.

Said George, " You wrote my name, I know ;
 I sowed the seed—who made it grow ?"

Said I, " That power unseen,
 Who caused the sun to shed his light,
 The rounded moon to shine by night,
 And hung the stars between.

" That God who made the oak-tree tall,
 The velvet moss upon the wall,
 The little daisy white ;
 The elephant, and spouting whale,
 Small harvest-mouse and horned snail,
 And the brown dust-like mite.

" The simplest flower by which we pass,
 Deep buried in the summer grass,
 Man hath not skill to make.
 Although he's power to build a town,
 He cannot form the thistle's down,
 Which every wind doth shake.

“Then ever bear in mind my child,
That there grows not by wayside wild,
Upon the lowliest sod,
A blade of grass, a common weed,
A tuft of moss, or naked reed.
But 'tis the WORK OF GOD.”



THE POOR GIRL TO HER MOTHER.

OH, mother dear! were you to die,
I do not know what I should do;
For no one else, were they to try,
Could be so kind to me as you.

When at your feet I lowly kneel,
And pray to God, to give me grace,
I cannot tell you all I feel,
When I look up into your face.

For tears will come, do what I will,
When your pale care-worn face I see ;
And I oft think, if you were ill,
Oh ! what would then become of me.

I know how hard you work for me,
I know that we are very poor ;
And that I must, (if I lost thee),
Go beg my bread from door to door.

I know you sit up half the night,
And sew, and sew, for little pay ;
I hear you rise before 't is light,
And see you sit and sew all day ;

Oh ! it is this which makes me weep,
And oft I sit up in my bed,
When you believe I'm fast asleep,
And see your hand support your head :—

And when you say, “poor child,” and sigh,
My head beneath the clothes I hide ;
I cannot bear to hear you cry
As you have done, since father died.

I'm but a little girl, I know,
And 't is but little I can do ;
Taller and stronger I shall grow,
And then I'll work as hard for you.



THE SPRING WALK.

WE had a pleasant walk to day
Over the meadows and far away,
Across the bridge by the water-mill,
By the woodside, and up the hill ;
And if you listen to what I say,
I'll tell you what we saw to day.

Amid a hedge, where the first leaves
Were peeping from their sheaths so sly,
We saw four eggs within a nest,
And they were blue as a summer sky.

An elder-branch dipped in the brook,
We wondered why it moved, and found
A silken-haired smooth water-rat
Nibbling, and swimming round and round.

THE SPRING WALK.

Where daisies opened to the sun,
In a broad meadow, green and white,
The lambs were racing eagerly—
We never saw a prettier sight.



We saw upon the shady banks
Long rows of golden flowers shine,
And first mistook for buttercups
The star-shaped yellow celandine.

Anemones and primroses,
And the blue violets of spring,
We found, while listening by a hedge
To hear a merry ploughman sing.

And from the earth the plough turned up,
There came a sweet refreshing smell,
Such as the lily of the vale
Sends forth from many a woodland dell.

THE SPRING WALK.

We saw the yellow wall-flower wave
 Upon a mouldering castle wall,
And then we watched the busy rooks
 Among the ancient elm-trees tall.

And leaning from the old stone bridge,
 Below we saw our shadows lie,
And through the gloomy arches watched
 The swift and fearless swallows fly.

We heard the speckle-breasted lark
 As it sang somewhere out of sight,
And tried to find it, but the sky
 Was filled with clouds of dazzling light.

We saw young rabbits near the wood,
 And heard a pheasant's wings go "whirr,"
And then we saw a squirrel leap
 From an old oak tree to a fir.

And many pretty birds we saw,
 Which had come o'er the stormy main,
'To build their nests, and rear their young,
 And sing in our old woods again.

We came back by the village fields,
 A pleasant walk it was across 'em,
For all behind the houses lay
 The orchards red and white with blossom.

Were I to tell you all we saw,
 I'm sure that it would take me hours ;
For the whole landscape was alive
 With bees, and birds, and buds, and flowers.



THE POOR LONDON GIRL.

WITHIN a narrow London court,
This little girl was born and bred,
And no one shares her childish sport.
She sleeps upon a hard straw-bed,
And is both poorly clothed and fed.

One ruined house, dark, low, and small,
Does that dull narrow court contain,
Before it stands a high dead wall,
Without a single window-pane,
But damp with mould, and rot, and rain.

Over that ruined house so fearful,
The wall its gloomy shadow flings,
The sparrows never chirrup cheerful,
But shake the soot from off their wings,
They are such black and dirty things.

That little girl has never seen
 A garden in which sweet flowers blow ;
 Nothing but old moss, black and green,
 Which on the murky eaves still grow,
 Or in the unpaved court below.

Poor little girl ! she cannot read,
 Neither has she been taught to pray,
 And it would make your kind hearts bleed,
 To see how she doth pass the day,
 All, save herself, then far away.

Ever arises with the light,
 Her mother, who is very poor,
 Nor from her work returns till night ;
 And often for twelve hours or more,
 That child will sit and watch the door.

About this earth she nothing knows,
 She very rarely sees the sun,
 But when the shadow darker grows,
 She up and down the court will run,
 " Mother," she says, " will soon be done."

When flowers are cried from street to street,
 She knows the season is called Spring,
 But never saw them waving sweet,
 Nor heard aught, save the sparrows, sing
 Their weary—weary chirrupping.

Seed-time and harvest are to her,
 Seasons unseen and names unknown ;
 In Autumn they cry lavender ;
 She never saw on hill or down
 The ripe and eary corn wave brown.

THE GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN.

Because the days are long and hot,
Summer from Winter she may know ;
Though there the sunshine lingers not :—
And when the long nights darker grow,
She looks for hail, and frost, and snow.

You pity this poor child so small,
Who in this narrow court was bred ?
Yet many have no home at all,
Nowhere at night to lay their head,
No living soul to give them bread.



THE GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN.

THE smallest bird that can be found,
If you search all England round,
Everywhere through glade and glen,
Is the golden-crested wren.

Though little, 'tis a brave bird too,
 And stays with us the winter through;
 Goes picking here, and hopping there,
 And never leaves us all the year.
 When it freezes, when it snows,
 When it thaws, and when it blows,
 You still see its little form
 Tossed about upon the storm;
 Rumpled, crumpled every feather,
 And all backward blown together,
 While it puffs, and pants, and draws
 Together close its little claws
 On some branch or mossy rail,
 Turning to the wind its tail.
 But if there be a hole at all,
 It can get in—it is so small—
 And shelter from the piercing cold
 Its pretty head and crest of gold.
 In spring it builds a little house,
 Scarce larger than the harvest mouse;
 And in it you'll find children five,
 The size of bees, and all alive.
 And for all these she must find bread,
 From morning till 'tis time for bed.
 And you will see this little wren,
 Works harder far than many men,
 Beginning when the dawn doth peep,
 Nor ending till it's time to sleep.
 Without a minute's pause or rest,
 She carries food into her nest
 Near forty times in every hour.
 Through the sunshine and the shower,
 Food doth she to her young convey,
 For sixteen hours through every day,
 Without a moment's time to play

THE GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN.

Ever coming, ever going,
Never idle, always doing
This a bit, and that a taste ;
Then she's off again in haste,
Across the field and by the mill,
Bringing something for each bill—
Bill wide-gaping every minute,
And she dropping something in it.
Such a hungry family
As a man doth seldom see ;
Helpless, and without a feather,
Opening all their mouths together.
As soon as brought, the food is gone,
All the five a-gape like one.
She herself can't get a bit,
There is such a "twit, twit, twit."
Though such a family she maintains,
Her weight is scarcely ninety grains :
No smaller bird can there be found,
If you search all England round.

I'm sure that every girl or boy
Will usefully their time employ,
And be ashamed to idle, when
They've read about this little wren.





CHILD AND MOTHER.

CHILD.

OH! why does brother William sleep
So long upon his little bed?
And why, dear mother, do you weep?

MOTHER.

Your brother William's dead.

CHILD.

I thought when dead, my mother dear,
That angels bore us through the sky?
But brother William still is here?

MOTHER.

No: he now dwells on high.

CHILD.

I stroke his hair, his hand I hold,
Oh, William, do get up and play.
Why is your hand so very cold?

MOTHER.

He hears not what you say.

CHILD.

And will he never wake again,
Nor spread his playthings on the floor?
Nor walk with us down the green lane?

MOTHER.

No, never—never more.

The little body that lies here,
Will rest beneath the church-yard sod.
His soul the angels back did bear,
Unto the hands of God.



THE FLY.

WHAT a sharp little fellow is Mister Fly,
He goes where he pleases, low or high,
And can walk just as well with his feet to the sky,
As I can on the floor.
At the window he comes
With a buzz and a roar,
And o'er the smooth glass
Can easily pass,
Or through the keyhole of the door.
He eats the sugar, and goes away,
Nor ever once asks what there is to pay ;
And sometimes he crosses the tea-pot's steam,
And comes and plunges his head in the cream ;
Then on the edge of the jug he stands,
And cleans his wings with his feet and hands.
This done, through the window he hurries away,
And gives a buzz, as if to say,
“ At present I have'nt a minute to stay,
But I'll peep in again in the course of the day.”
Then away he'll fly,
Where the sunbeams lie,
And neither stop to shake hands,
Nor bid one good-bye :
Such a strange little fellow is Mister Fly,
Who goes where he pleases, low or high,
And can walk on the ceiling
Without ever feeling
A fear of tumbling down “ sky-high.”



THE CRADLE SONG.

My dearest baby go to sleep,
For now the bright round moon doth peep
On thy little snow-white bed,
And upon thy pretty head.

The silver stars are shining bright,
And bid my baby dear good night ;
And every bird has gone to rest
Long since, in its little nest.

The lambs no longer run and leap,
But by the daisies lie asleep ;
The flowers have closed their pretty eyes
Until the sun again shall rise.

THE CRADLE SONG.

All things are wrapt in sweet repose,
The dew falls noiseless on the rose:
So thou must like an angel lie
Till golden morning streaks the sky.

Soon will I gently steal to bed,
And rest beside thy pretty head,
And all night keep thee snug and warm,
Nestling fondly on my arm.

Then dearest baby go to sleep.
While the moon doth on thee peep,
Shining on thy little bed,
And around thy pretty head.





THE PET LAMB.



THE PET LAMB.

PART THE FIRST.

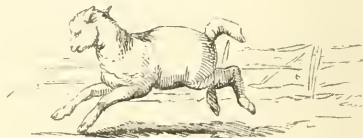
ONCE on a time, a shepherd lived
 Within a cottage small ;
The grey thatched roof was shaded by
 An elm-tree dark and tall ;
While all around stretched far away
 A wild and lonesome moor,
Except a little daisied field
 Before the trellised door.

Now it was on a cold March day,
 When on the moorland wide,
The shepherd found a trembling lamb
 By its dead mother's side ;

And so pitiful it bleated,
 As with the cold it shook,
 He wrapped it up beneath his coat,
 And home the poor lamb took.

He placed it by the warm fireside,
 And then his children fed
 This little lamb, whose mother died,
 With milk and sweet brown bread,
 Until it ran about the floor,
 Or at the door would stand ;
 And grew so tame it ate its food
 From out the children's hand.

It followed them where'er they went,
 Came ever at their call,
 And dearly was this pretty lamb
 Belov'd by them all.
 And often on a market-day,
 When cotters crossed the moor,
 They stopped to praise this snow-white lamb
 Beside the cottage door ;
 They patted it upon its head,
 And stroked it with the hand,
 And vowed it was the prettiest lamb
 They 'd seen in all the land.





THE PET LAMB. PART THE SECOND.

Now this kind shepherd was as ill,
As ill, as he could be,
And kept his bed for many a week,
And nothing earn'd he ;
And when he had got well again,
He to his wife did say,
“ The doctor wants his money, and
I have n't it to pay.

“ What shall we do, what can we do ?
The doctor's made me well,
There's only one thing can be done.
We must the pet lamb sell ;
We've nearly eaten all the bread,
And how can we get more,

Unless you call the butcher in
When he rides by the door?"

"Oh, do not sell my white pet lamb,"
Then little Mary said,
"And every night I'll go up stairs
Without my tea to bed;
For if the butcher buys my lamb,
He'll take away its life,
And make its pretty white throat bleed
With his sharp cruel knife;

"And never in the morning light
Again it will me meet,
Nor come again to lick my hand,
Look up to me and bleat.
Oh, do not sell my sweet pet lamb;
And if you'll let it live,
The best half of my bread and milk
I will unto it give."
The doctor at that very time
Entered the cottage door,
As, with her arms around her lamb,
She sat upon the floor.





THE PET LAMB. PART THE THIRD.

“ WHY do you weep, my pretty girl ?”

The doctor then did say.

“ Because I love my little lamb,
Which must be sold to-day ;

It lies beside my bed at night,

And, oh, it is so still,

It never made a bit of noise

When father was so ill.

“ Oh, do not let them sell my lamb,

And then I ’ll go to bed,

And never ask for aught to eat

But a small piece of bread.”

“ I ’ll buy the lamb and give it you,”

The kind good doctor said,

“ And with the money that I pay
Your father can buy bread.

“ As for the bill, that can remain
Until another year.”

He paid the money down, and said,
“ The lamb is yours my dear ;
You have a kind and gentle heart,
And God who made us all,
He loveth well those who are kind
To creatures great and small ;

“ And while I live, my little girl,
Your lamb shall not be sold,
But play with you upon the moor,
And sleep within the fold.”
And so the white pet lamb was saved,
And played upon the moor,
And after little Mary ran
About the cottage floor.

It fed upon the cowslips tall,
And ate the grass so sweet,
And on the little garden walk
Pattered its pretty feet ;
And with its head upon her lap
The little lamb would lay
Asleep beneath the elm-tree's shade,
Upon the summer's day,
While she twined flowers around its neck,
And called it her “ Sweet May.”



THE DROWNED BOY.

THE simple story I relate
Is very sad, but very true ;
And it is of a schoolboy's fate,
A merry lad, whom well I knew,
That I this sorrowful story tell,
Which on his thirteenth birthday fell.

I well remember on that day
His widowed mother's pleasant smile,
How ere we started off to play,
By Ashcroft's green and willowy isle,
To lure us back in time for tea,
The large plum-cake she let us see.

And good advice she to us gave,
Which we aside did reckless throw.
One only promise did she crave,
Into the river not to go.
We gave that promise, went away,
Alas! that we should disobey.

We left the vale and hills behind,
 The wooden mill, and common wide.
 Then did by circling footpaths wind
 Our way up to the river's side.
 Now in, now out, now seen, now hidden,
 We came unto that spot forbidden.

Brightly the rippling river run,
 In light and shadow here and there.
 And quivered in the summer sun,
 A golden pathway shining clear,
 That seemed to stretch out far away,
 As if to reach the gates of day.

“Let's bathe,” said one; “the day is warm,
 We know there is no danger here.”
 So we agreed, and thought no harm,
 For oft before we had bathed there.
 He was the first to lead the way,
 Whose birth we welcomed on that day.

There was no danger near the shore,
 While within depth we did remain,
 Nor ventured where the eddies tore
 The jetty round, then met again;
 'T was said no bottom could be found,
 Where they went ever boiling round.

We who could swim went far away,
 Some plashed beneath the willows dank,
 Others upon the greensward lay,
 Or idly gazed from off the bank,
 Until a shrill cry rent the air,
 Which made our very hearts despair.



THE DROWNED BOY. PART THE SECOND.

ALTHOUGH 'tis many years ago,

I feel my conscience still upbraid,
That I deceived his mother so,

And her strict orders disobeyed.
And I would warn you for his sake,
Never your solemn word to break.

Amid the eddies' boiling roar,

We saw his head move round and round,
And as his eyes turned to the shore,

He sank within that gulph profound.
On rolled the water as before,
Where he had sunk to rise no more.

Mute, horror-struck, we stood aghast!

Looking where the deep eddies lay.

And one poor boy exclaimed at last,
 "Oh, what will his dear mother say?"
 Another said, "His birthday too!
 Oh, what will his poor mother do?"

And who will to his mother dear
 The tidings of his death convey,
 And home those empty garments bear?
 (His Sunday-clothes worn on that day.)
 Who'll enter that low cottage door,
 And say, "he will return no more?"

No more, no more—Oh, never more!
 Thou'lt hear his merry footstep tread
 Upon that white and sanded floor.
 Pillowed is now his curly head
 Deep down upon that sandy soil,
 O'er which the eddies roar and boil.

Sobbing, we bore his clothes away,
 For each a mournful portion took,
 His hat, his boots, the branch of May,
 Which he from the old hawthorn broke;
 And with eyes bent upon the ground,
 We walked along in grief profound.

We reached the whitewashed village school,
 And to the master told our tale,
 How, 'mid the eddies' dark whirlpool,
 Below the bend of Ashcroft vale,
 Deep drowned our little playmate lay.
 He sighed, and turned his head away.

He walked along in awe and dread,
 And unto her the tidings told.

THE DROWNED BOY.

She sat beside his empty bed
All night, until the morning cold.
They said, 't was pitiful to see
That woman in her misery.

The mother, broken-hearted, died
Upon the day her boy was found,
And they were buried side by side,
The Sunday after he was drowned.
Then children all, mind what I say,
Nor once your parents disobey.*

* I scarcely need tell my little readers, that this is a true tale ; that I was present when the poor boy was drowned in the river Trent, that I carried some portion of his clothes to the schoolmaster, and followed his remains to the grave.



THE SUN.

SOMEWHERE it is always light ;
For when 't is morning here,
In some far distant land 't is night,
And the bright moon shines there.

When you 're undressed and going to bed,
They are just rising there,
And morning on the hills doth spread,
When it is evening here.

And other distant lands there be,
Where it is always night ;
For weeks and weeks they never see
The sun, nor have they light.

For it is dark both night and day,
But what 's as wondrous quite,
The darkness it doth pass away,
And then for weeks 't is light.

Yes, while you sleep the sun shines bright,
The sky is blue and clear ;
For weeks and weeks there is no night,
But always daylight there.



WORD PICTURES.

SILENTLY the green grass groweth,
Rapidly the river floweth,
Over the sea the wild wind bloweth
Loud and fearfully.

Low and sweet the throstle singeth,
Sad and deep the death-bell ringeth,
While to the grave the mother bringeth
Her dead mournfully.

High above the eagle soareth,
Far below the torrent roareth,
While a wailing voice deploreth
The loved one mourningly.

WORD PICTURES.

The raven in his sleep complaineth,
The pale moon in the dark sky waneth,
Heavily the black cloud raineth
Black and heavily.

On the dark sea the captain steereth,
And the sunken rocks he feareth :
When the morning light appeareth
Right glad is he.

O'er the wave the sea-mew screameth :
When the golden dawning beameth,
Then secure, the captain dreameth,
Homeward wandering.

On the hearth the old cat thrummeth,
Round the flower the black bee hummeth,
O'er the sea the swallow cometh
With returning Spring.





DAISIES.

THE daisy smileth everywhere,
No matter if there's no one near,
It looks up quite as pleasantly,
As if a thousand did it see.
No vanity—no courting praises,
Will you find amongst the daisies.
Look upon its honest face ;
In its features you may trace
Open-eyed sincerity.

Let's go out in windy weather,
When millions of them move together,

DAISIES.

Nodding heads, and changing places,
As if they were running races.
Straining on across the field,
Not one at all inclined to yield.
The wind blows off, we look again,
Each in its place doth still remain,
 Though all moved so merrily.

Sometimes the daisies, hand in hand,
Go stretching over miles of land ;
Like children filling the highway,
When they break up for holiday.
Sometimes they play at hide-and-seek,
And with the breeze have many a freak,
While they hide their heads so small
Underneath the grasses tall,
 Where bees murmur pleasantly.

Bill, that scarce can run, can easy
Crawl on his knees, and reach the daisy.
And poor limping Ned, the cripple,
Seeing them tries to hop and hipple ;
For they are flowers of old renown,
And grow up close beside the town.
Children they love to see and greet 'em,
So at the town-end come to meet 'em,
 Far as they can for company.

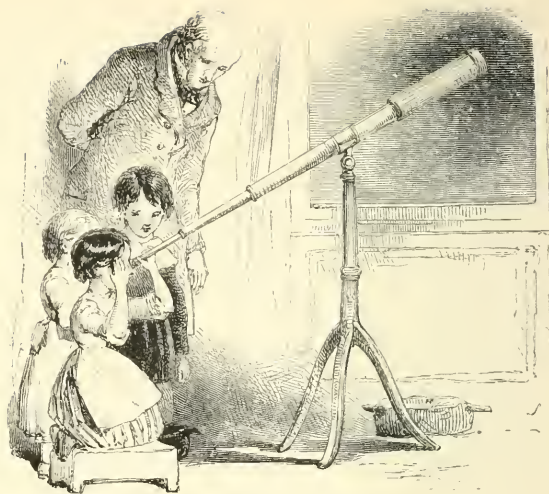
At night they bend their silver heads,
And there the snow-white lambs find beds.
And when the morning gilds the skies,
Daisies and lambs together rise.

DAISIES.

If they o'er-sleep themselves, the lark
Springs up, and cries aloud, "Hark, hark,
The gates of morning they're unbarring,
Night's lamps are out, there's not a star in
All heaven's broad blue canopy."

Go see the daisy shut at night,
When it folds its frill of white ;
What cares it for wind or rain,
It is then a bud again ;
For it doth a green hood wear,
Which covers up its silvery hair ;
Drops its round head and goes to sleep,
Until the new-born day doth peep
In its velvet dormitory.





DISTANT WORLDS.

ABOUT this earth, above the sky,
Worlds beyond worlds unnumbered lie ;
And each around its own bright sun
Year after year its course doth run,
True as the dial to the day,
Each moves in its allotted way.
Uranus hangs so far from earth,
That on the morn of Moses' birth
Had a race-horse from it started,
And through the cloud and sunshine darted,
And never halted in its flight,
But ever galloped day and night,
Without pausing, without sleeping,
Ever onward, downward sweeping,

Not half its journey would be done,
Not half the distance now be run,
Had it set out for this earth
On the morn of Moses' birth.
Oft glittering like the light of noon,
Are seen the mountains in the moon,
On whose tops the sunbeams glow,
While gloomy shadows sleep below ;
We see mount Tycho's towering height
Throw back the sun's reflected light ;
Through Rosse's telescope while gazing,
Some have seen vast volcanoes blazing,
And reddening wide the valleys deep,
Which round the moon's piled mountains sleep.
Comets that travel wide and far,
Perchance have passed by every star,
By every world beyond our sight—
They move with half the speed of light ;
Yet oft some planet's mighty force
Will twist them from their onward course,
Or hurl them quick as lightning's pace
'Mid the immensity of space ;
The sun in Mercury doth appear
Six times larger than seen here,
And it shineth six times brighter,
And makes that planet six times lighter
Than this earth on which we dwell.
Such brilliancy no tongue can tell ;
The stars that hang in Syrian skies
Glitter like gems of richest dyes,
Blazing on high they there are seen,
In ruby, purple, gold, and green ;
Those bright and shooting stars we see
Are still to us a mystery :

EVENING.

Rushing by each golden star,
Which on us shineth from afar,
Whence they come, or whither go,
Mortal man may never know.
Angels may all God's wonders tell,
When in eternity we dwell.



EVENING.

IN WORDS OF ONE SYLLABLE.

THE day is past, the sun is set,
And the white stars are in the sky ;
While the long grass with dew is wet,
And through the air the bats now fly.

EVENING.

The lambs have now lain down to sleep,
The birds have long since sought their nests ;
The air is still ; and dark, and deep
On the hill side the old wood rests.

Yet of the dark I have no fear,
But feel as safe as when 't is light ;
For I know God is with me there,
And he will guard me through the night.

For God is by me when I pray,
And when I close mine eyes in sleep,
I know that He will with me stay,
And will all night watch by me keep.

For He who rules the stars and sea,
Who makes the grass and trees to grow,
Will look on a poor child like me,
When on my knees I to Him bow.

He holds all things in His right hand,
The rich, the poor, the great, the small ;
When we sleep, or sit, or stand,
Is with us, for He loves us all.



THE OLD CHARWOMAN.

Do you hear that knock at the door? Hark! hark!
It is the poor old Charwoman come in the dark,
The little girl's mother I mentioned before,
Who in the court waits on the step of the door;
You remember that court, and the high dead wall,
On which the bright sun never shineth at all.

Her mother has come here to scour and clean,
In an old faded brown bonnet she's seen,
And her shawl's stained by the wind and the
weather,

That she wonders herself how it still holds
together.

Till the servant comes down on the door-step
she'll stand,

With two odd old pattens held fast in her hand;
While under her arm a coarse apron she brings,
Which she kneels on to scrub amid all sorts of
things.

In dark cupboards and closets where black-beetles
run,

And cellars which never are lit by the sun ;

Under the grates, and under the sinks,

She rubs and she scrubs, she winks and she blinks ;

And she shades her dim eyes when she reaches the
light,

And seems like a bat that can see best at night.

Each dark hole and corner she rummages out,

And the mice, no doubt, wonder what she's about,

As they hear her hard brush go scrub, scrub, scrub,

And then her large floor-cloth go rub, rub, rub ;

While down all sorts of holes the black-beetles dash,

When in the cellar they hear her splash, splash.

As from the dark nooks she oftentimes brings,

Dead mice or dead crickets, and all sorts of things.

The old cat seems ever to be her friend,

And up stairs and down stairs doth on her attend ;

He sticks up his tail, and he goes purring round,

Rubbing her with his nose while she kneels on the
ground.

And when her work's done in the kitchen she's seen,

Telling Betty "how bad her rheumatics have been,

How this arm has pained her, how bad was that
knee,"

All the while she's enjoying her "nice dish of tea."

But for the old charwoman coming to clean,

The house at times would not be fit to be seen ;

For if she did n't scour the closets and shelves,

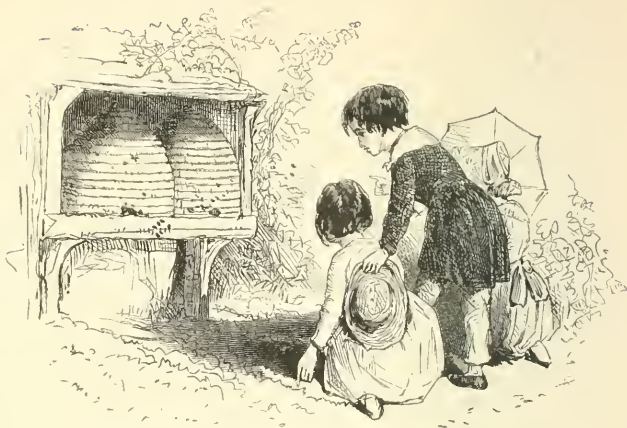
We must lay by all pride and do them ourselves ;

The lady must kneel down and scrub her own floor,

And do her own charring if there were no poor.

That we help one another, bear ever in mind,

And that those serve us best to whom we are kind.



INDUSTRY OF ANIMALS.

THE lute-voiced birds rise with the light,
Their nestling young to feed,
Pursue the insects in their flight,
Or pluck the feathery seed.

The golden-belted humming bee
Goes toiling hour by hour,
Over the moor and distant lea,
Wherever grows a flower.

With weary journeys up and down,
He home his honey brings,
From gardens in the distant town,
And while he labours sings.

The long-tailed field-mouse to the wood
Makes journeys many a score,
And in a granary piles his food,
And hoards his wintry store.

Within the hollow of a tree
The nimble squirrel hides
His meat and nuts right cunningly,
And for the cold provides.

His home the mole makes underground,
With runs and chambers crossed,
And galleries circling round and round,
In which you would be lost.

Although the swallow in her nest
Displays such art and skill,
She has no tools save her white breast,
And small sharp-pointed bill.

There's not an insect crawls or flies
But what has work to do,
And the same God their want supplies
Who watcheth over you.

No single thing did God create,
But he for it gave food,
And whether it be small or great,
"He saw that it was good."



LINCOLN LANE.

THE MARRIAGE OF THE FROG AND THE MOUSE.

A VERY OLD NURSERY RHYME.

THERE was a frog lived in a well,
Fa la, Lincoln Lane.

And a merry mouse lived in a mill,
Faddy O, fa, Lincoln Lane.

This froggy would a wooing go,
Fa la, &c.

But could 'nt walk for the corn on his toe,
Faddy O, fa, &c.

So he mounted, and away did ride,
Fa la, &c.

With a sword and a pistol by his side.
Faddy O, fa, &c.

He rode till he came to Miss Mouse's hall,
Fa la, &c.

And then he did both knock and call.
Faddy O, fa, &c.

“ Pray, Miss Mouse, are you within ?”
Fa la, &c.

“ Oh, yes, kind sir, and going to spin.”
Faddy O, fa, &c.

“ Pray, Miss Mouse, will you marriage make
Fa la, &c.

With a young frog that 's tall and straight ?”
Faddy O, fa, &c.

“ My uncle rat went out this morn,
Fa la, &c.
And I won't consent till his return.”
Faddy O, fa, &c.

Her uncle rat he did come home,
Fa la, &c.
Saying, “ Who's been here since I've been gone ?”
Faddy O, fa, &c.

“ There's been a noble, tall, straight man,
Fa la, &c.
Who vows he'll marry me if he can.”
Faddy O, fa, &c.

“ We'll have the wedding in the mill.”
Fa la, &c.
“ Oh, yes, kind uncle, so we will.”
Faddy O, fa, &c.

Now while they all at dinner sat,
Fa la, &c.
In came the kitten and the cat.
Faddy O, fa, &c.

The cat seized uncle rat by the crown,
Fa la, &c.
The kitten pulled the poor wife down.
Faddy O, fa, &c.

The frog he did run up the wall,
Fa la, &c.
And said, “ Oh dear! they'll kill us all.”
Faddy O, fa, &c.

LINCOLN LANE.

The frog he did run up the brook,
Fa la, &c.

And there he met with a hungry duck.
Faddy O, fa, &c.

The duck, he swallowed him down his throat,
Fa la, &c.

Saying, "there's an end of these fine folk."
Faddy O, fa la, Lincoln Lane.

I beg to inform you, my most respected little masters and mistresses, that this merry song was a great favourite in the nurseries of the midland counties of England, above a century and a half ago; and was known to many of your great-great-grandmothers. Having never seen it in print, I humbly beg to be allowed to place it at your very little feet; also to assure you that I have heard it chanted hundreds of times, to the very soothing and drowsy air of "Fa la! Lincoln Lane."









THE BABES IN THE WOOD,

A NEW VERSION OF THE OLD BALLAD.

THE pitying tears of childhood are
The happiest tears we shed,
And through them (trembling ere they fell),
The story I first read
Of the pretty babes, who in the wood,
“Went wandering up and down,
But never more they saw the man
Approaching from the town.”

I knew the oaken chamber well
In which those parents lay,
And o'er the diamond window-panes
Saw the green ivy stray;—

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

Saw the dark shadows of the leaves,
That quivered on the floor,
And the sunlight from the lattice fall
Upon the wardrobe door.

That antique bed's rude tapestry
Oft rose before my eyes,
Its curtains were embroidered with
Meek Abel's sacrifice.
Though Cain was there with lowering brow,
He seemed not to remain ;
So oft that cruel uncle came,
And filled the place of Cain.



I knew that father's sorrowing face,
He wore a pointed beard,

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

And when he to his brother spoke,
These words I overheard :
“ God knows what will become of them
When I am dead and gone !”
For as he spoke, his dying eyes
Those children fell upon.

Something the dying father felt,
But what I could not tell,
Though I noticed at the moment how
The uncle's shadow fell
Dark on the children as they knelt,
Dark on the counterpane,
Dark upon Abel's sacrifice ;
Darker on frowning Cain.



THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

I watched that uncle's countenance,
He had two cruel eyes,
And a low and crafty forehead, full
Of treachery and lies ;
And when he on those children looked,
Their little hearts would quake,
And fluster, like a frightened bird's
Before a glittering snake.

I saw the mother's cold wan face,
The damp curls on her cheek,
Her thin and white uplifted hands,
And faintly did she speak,
Then with her lips "as cold as stone"
She kissed her children small,
Then turned her streaming eyes away
Towards the silent wall.

And when the uncle answer made,
His glance fell on the floor,
And his voice faltered when he wished
He ne'er might prosper more,
If he unto those children dear
His pledge did not fulfil :
And then I knew that they were dead,
The chamber was so still.

I knew that they had often prayed
In the same hour to die,
And that within the self-same grave
Together they might lie.

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

And to those full-blown roses, Death
Came like a gentle wind,
And scattered all their leaves at once,
But left the buds behind.



I often saw the old churchyard
In which those parents sleep ;
The chequering shadows of the elm
Across their green graves sweep ;
The grey sun-dial near the porch,
Lettered with rustic rhyme ;
The glass, and scythe, and outstretched wings,
Emblems of fleeting time.

I knew those childish features well ;
He had his father's face,
But in his mild and gentle eyes,
I could the mother trace ;

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

Jane like a little angel looked
Who here had come astray,
And fain to Heaven would wander back,
But could not ask her way.

Weeping I saw them led from home,
And when the uncle tried
To soothe them with his hollow words,
More bitterly they cried ;
He fawned on them when strangers came,
“ And much of them he made,”
But all the kindness, was deceit,
Which he to them displayed.



Within the large old orchard, where
The children used to play,
I saw them cease their gambols, if
The Uncle came that way,

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

Look pale and speak in whispers, then
Each other's hand would seize,
And hide themselves, till he was gone,
Among the apple-trees.

Somehow they felt they loved him not,
Although they knew not why,
But there was something in his voice,
And in his snake-like eye,
Which seemed to fill their little hearts
With such instinctive dread
As makes the stock-dove tremble, when
The hawk is overhead.

I know when he had planned the deed
What dark misgivings came,
Remembrance of that death-bed scene
Which shook his very frame.
And that when oft he did desire
To take their lives away,
His conscience wandered to the bed
In which their parents lay.

That the wealth which they inherited
Was ever in his head,
That he thought about it waking,
And dreamed of it in bed ;
And would have done the deed himself,
Nor trusted to another,
Had he not in their faces seen
The likeness of his brother.

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

I knew the dark deep pond, and saw
Him often walk around,
Knew that he would have drowned them there.
But feared they might be found—



Feared that the whole wide neighbourhood
Would be searched far and near,
For all who knew them (save himself)
Did love those children dear.

When but a child, I often saw
Two ruffians by my bed,
And to evade their looks I drew
The clothes above my head:
One had a face in which at times
Something like mercy gleamed,
The other had a shaggy brow,
With guilty furrows seamed.

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.



'Twas in that very orchard where
The children used to play,
He "bargained" with those "ruffians rude"
To take their lives away ;
And while he counted out the gold,
He shook with guilty fear,
For in the rustling leaves he seemed
His brother's voice to hear.

The horses I oft pictured, as
They stood before the door ;
The very costume, and the arms
Those hired ruffians wore ;
Heard the last kiss which, Judas-like,
He to those children gave,
While in his heart that uncle wished
They were within the grave.

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

And in my dreams I saw their nurse,
And bitterly she cried,
That all the way from Norfolk up
To London they must ride ;
And when they had some distance gone,
I seemed to hear her call,
And bid the horseman take great care
Her darlings did not fall.



I heard that fair boy's merry voice,
Urging the horse to go,
And though his heels scarce reached its sides,
Saw them move to and fro ;
And when his dear hands touched the reins,
He turned his head aside,
As if to bid the ruffian look
How ably he could ride.

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

Before the other horseman sat
That pretty angel, Jane,
Weeping as if her little heart
Would break with inward pain ;
It might be parting from her nurse,
Or thinking of her mother,
But most she cried to ride upon
The horse which bore her brother.

Weeping I saw her ride along,
And still remember well,
How, on the ruffian's bridle-hand,
Two of her bright tears fell ;
And how he, with a sudden jerk
Which turned his horse's head,
Shook off the tears, as if they were
Big drops of scalding lead.



THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

For out upon a lonesome road,
That crossed a moorland wide,
I saw the horses move abreast,
The horsemen side by side ;
Those children then so “ pleasantly ”
Did “ prattle ” on the way,
The ruffians at each other looked,
But nothing did they say.

And he who was of “ mildest mood,”
Although he spoke no word,
Showed by his very looks how much
The deed his soul abhorred.
Some motion of the elbow made
The other chink his gold,
And then he knit his brow again,
And on the children scowl'd.

They prattled on, and the boy said
That “ God was everywhere ; ”
Jane pointed to a silver cloud,
And asked if God was there ;
He said their parents were in heaven,
And then they looked on high,
And turned their pretty faces to
The blue autumnal sky.

The ruffians in their saddles writhed,
And one his forehead smote,
And wished the gold he had was then
Forced down their uncle's throat ;

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

Said he, "I cannot do this deed,
They could but kneel and cry ;
In battle, where 't is man to man,
You conquer or you die."

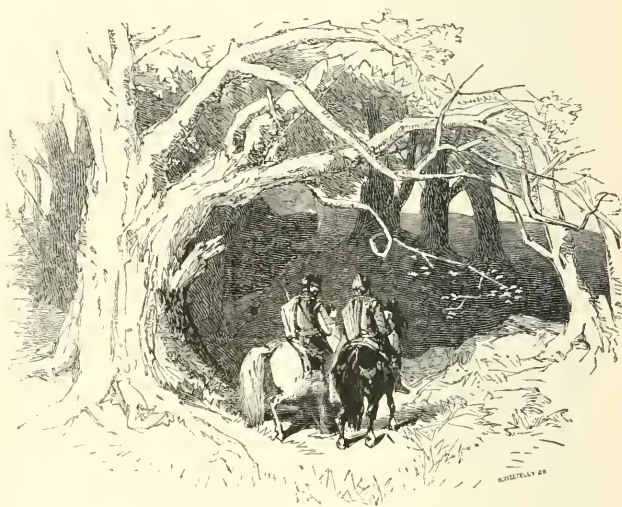
The other said, "I hate the work
Which soldiers glory call ;
Where, for a whole day's murdering,
The wages are so small.
Give me a job like this, in which
No danger's to be found,
No backward-stroke—one blow, and then
A hole within the ground."

"That shall not be while I look on,"
Said he of mildest mood,
Just as the horses entered on
An "unfrequented wood,"
"The sword I've for my country drawn
Is still a soldier's blade ;
Your's looks as if it were, alone,
For little children made."

"I but call him chicken-hearted,"
The sterner man replied,
"Who shirks the work for which he's paid,
Whatever may betide.
As for the metal of my sword,
That you can soon essay,
In the first open spot we reach
Along this wooded way."

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

On, through that wood of ancient growth
They went, past aged trees,
Such as had stood and seen the fall
Of mighty monarchies ;
Had echoed back the wolf's long howl
E're Norman kings rode there
With whoop and haloo, horn and hound,
To chase the fallow deer.



The paths by which those hunters old,
In early days had gone,
Thick barriers of underwood
Had long since closed upon.
And, where the open spaces stretched,
Through which the eye could sweep,
Bramble and bush, and gorse, and fern,
Full saddle-girth lay deep.

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

Here black and bowery hollows went
From gloom to darker gloom ;
Like chambers in the pyramids,
Each but a deeper tomb.
And there the aged holly grew,
And clustering yew trees frowned,
While centuries of ivy hemmed
The hoary trunks around.

And there an awful silence slept,
So still, and so unbroken,
It sent the blood back to the heart,
If but a word was spoken.
They rode along, and reached a glade
Beside the forest-mere,
When one said briefly, " Let's dismount,
We will decide it here."

The water of the mere was blue
As the clear autumn sky,
And in its chrystal depths I saw
Surrounding shadows lie.
The berries of the mountain ash
Upon the surface hung,
Like crimson curtains carelessly
Around a mirror flung.

I could not bear to see them fight,
So turned my head aside,
To where, amid the withering fern,
Those children sat and cried.

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

I heard the clashing of their swords,
And then a deep, deep groan,
And then a plash within the mere,
As of a heavy stone.



And then I heard those children raise
A wild and fearful scream :—
And when I looked around again,
It all seemed like a dream.
But where the crimson berries lay
Reflected in the mere,
I saw upon the water's edge
A trail of blood appear.

I saw the spot on which they fought,
'Mid tall white grass unmown,

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

The heather, and the fox-glove tall,
Which they had trampled down ;
The footmarks slippery with gore
Beside the heath-flower bell,
When, with the sword-point through his heart,
Into the mere he fell.

And then the slayer wiped his sword
Upon his horse's mane,
Then from the mossy bough unbound
Once more his bridle rein,
And, throwing it across his arm,
Walked on in sullen mood,
Leading those children by the hand
Deeper into the wood.



THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

I heard him bid them "not to cry,"
And bitterly he spoke,
And when they asked him for some bread,
He pointed to an oak ;
And on the banks its boughs o'erhung,
He bade them to remain,
And sternly said, "I'll bring you bread
When I do come again."

And then he rode away, as though
He would outstrip the wind,
As if remembrance of that deed
He would leave far behind.
And once he checked his foam-fleched steed,
And pressed his guilty brain,
And I had hopes that he would fetch
Those children back again.



THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

At last their tears like April showers,
Were dried, and blown away,
And, though he sighed, I saw the boy
With his sweet sister play.
He pulled for her ripe blackberries,
And hummed a childish song ;
And when she wept again, he said,
“ Don't cry, he'll not be long.”



He made for her a little feast
In the acorn cups he found,
And then he placed a large dock-leaf
For table, on the ground.
This berry he a custard called,
And that a dainty pie,
And “ their pretty lips with blackberries,
They did besmear and dye.”

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

And when the shadows of the trees
 Longer and darker grew,
And to the thickets of the woods
 The black rooks homeward flew,
While slow the sun behind the oaks
 Sunk ominous and red,
Speechless, within their little hearts,
 Lay Hope, for ever dead.

Onward, through the deep underwood
 They wandered hand in hand,
Then, by the bole of some huge oak,
 I saw them listening stand.
They wandered through the dewy grass,
 And through the bracken brown,
“But never more they saw the man
 Approaching from the town.”

Then, o'er that gloomy land of trees
 The lingering daylight died,
“And when they saw the darksome night,
 They sat them down and cried.”
I saw the twilight o'er them close,
 I heard the red fox bark ;
Then faint and fainter came their sobs
 Low-sounding through the dark.

Poor children ! many since, like them
 In life's entangling wood,
Have waited sad and patiently,
 With aching hearts, for food.

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

Have wandered hopeless, hand in hand,
 Along life's forest wide,
Until Despair's deep night came on,
 Then laid them down, and died.

I heard the deep-voiced night-wind rise,
 And bitterly it blew,
The leaves along the forest paths
 Like routed armies flew.
And with it came a killing frost,
 Such as, in autumn time,
Hangs the black bean-sheaves in the fields
 With flakes of hoary rime.

All night I heard the wild wind blow,
 And as it rose and fell,
It seemed to peal upon mine ear
 Like a deep funeral bell.
And from the gloomy glens and dells
 The darkness circled round,
The gusty eddies ever brought
 A sad, low wailing sound.

And sometimes o'er the tall tree tops,
 Seen by the starlight dim,
Low voices ever came and went,
 Chaunting a heavenly hymn.
Then bending o'er those children small,
 I in my dream descried
Two forms which bore the semblance of
 Their parents that had died.

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.



I wept myself to sleep, nor woke
 Until the dawn of day,
Then, dead within each other's arms,
 I saw those children lay.
Cold, wan, and marble-like they looked,
 Their hands and faces bare,
While the frost like a silver braid,
 Hung on their silky hair.

They like two little angels looked,
 Who had lain down to rest,
She, as if shrinking from the cold,
 Reclined upon his breast ;
While one arm, like the woodbine sweet,
 That does the rose bedeck,
Lay motionless where it had twined
 So fondly round his neck.

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

Half buried in the heather-bloom
His placid face was laid,
While, o'er the whiteness of his brow,
The brown fern threw a shade.
A milk white doe with gentle eyes,
Peeped through the underwood,
And, till a band of Robins came,
Mute as a mourner stood.



Those birds went hopping round and round,
And sometimes one drew near,
And, pausing with its head aside,
Looked on those children dear ;
Then one began a low, sweet song,
Another soon replied,
As if they asked each other how
Those pretty children died.

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

And one which had a ruby breast,
That would the rose outshame,
Bearing a leaf within his beak,
Close to the children came ;
And, looking down so pitiful,
Did for a moment stand,
Then gently he the leaf let fall
On little Jane's cold hand.

Upon the ground he hopped again,
And quickly brought another,
And that as gently dropped upon
The cold cheek of her brother.
Then on the fern he perched himself,
And warbled low his grief,
And while he sang the Robins came,
And each one bore a leaf,



THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

And dropped it on those children dead,
Then back again they flew,
And every time they went and came,
The pile of leaves up-grew ;
I scarcely could the red leaves tell
From the Red-robins' breasts,
So quickly they flew to and fro,
Nor halted once to rest.

And on and o'er those children dear,
As lightsomely they stept,
As when they settled on the nest
In which their young ones slept.
They left on neither face or hand
The imprint of their feet,
But "painfully" did cover them,
And well their work complete.



THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

They all the richest treasures brought
From autumn's gorgeous hall,
And wove them with their little beaks
Into a funeral pall.
Leaves of all hues, red, green, and gold,
Ruins of Summer-bowers,
A thousand times more beautiful
Than all her rarest flowers.

And when their solemn work was done,
Loudly the old wood rang,
As, perched on the surrounding boughs,
They all like angels sang.
And then I paused and shut the book,
And soft the page did fold,
Fearful the rustling leaves might break
That superstition old.

And sometimes I a vision saw
Of one who beat his breast,
And shook his head, and wrung his hands,
And sought in vain for rest ;
Who never seemed to be alone,
When up, nor when in bed ;
For faces round him crowding came,—
Faces, as of the dead.

And childish voices through his ears
Seemed ever sounding shrill ;
But mostly in the silent night,
When all beside was still.

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

Then pattering, as of little feet
Came sounding on the stair,
And as he listened, all an end
Stood up his grisly hair.

That was the uncle, on whom fell
The heavy wrath of God ;
Whom Justice, with unerring aim,
Smote with an iron rod ;
Whose haggard cheek and furrowed brow
(As all who looked could see)
Were graven o'er with hopeless guilt,
And " extreme misery."

A murrain on his cattle seized,
They died in fold and field,
And all his " lands were barren made,"
No produce would they yield.
The lightning fired his house and barns
One sultry summer night,
And, as they blazed, for miles around
They threw an angry light.

" And on the voyage to Portugal,"
(While he in prison lay)
He heard how both his sons had died
Upon the self-same day
And how the ruffian who survived,
(Beneath the gallows tree)
Before he died, confession made
Of all his villany.

THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

“ And ” (thus) “ the heavy wrath of God,
Upon their uncle fell,”
While in his heart and in his brain
He ever “ felt a hell.”



And on the night when he was found
Dead on the prison floor,
Such dreadful shrieks and sounds were heard,
As ne'er were heard before.

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