

Enchanted Tulips and Other Verses for Children

Maud Keary

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Maud Keary

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To Henry, Colin and Anne

Children who have read and cared for *Little Wanderlin*, *Heroes of Asgard*, and *The Magic Valley*, will, I hope, kindly welcome those verses of my great-aunts Annie and Eliza Keary, which form a part of this volume. As they were not sufficient for publication alone, they have lain aside for two generations: now I venture to offer some of my own with them, confident that in such company mine too will be the kindlier received. Those verses which are not mine are initialled.

Thanks are due to the editors of *St. Nicholas Magazine*, *Chatterbox*, *The Prize*, and *Sunday* (published by Messrs. Wells Gardner, Darton & Co.); also to Mr. Holbrook Jackson, the compiler of *Everychild*, for leave to reprint such

verses as have already appeared in their pages.

Maud Keary.

THE ALPHABET

LONG is the Alphabet
In my blue reading book:
There is each letter set,
With its peculiar look
Some seeming fat and glad,
Others a little sad.

Some seeming very wise,
Some with a roguish look,
Making all kinds of eyes
In my blue reading book!
While a few seem to say,
"Shall you know us to-day?"

THE OAK

"**DEAR** me, how nice this rain is," said the Oak,
"I hope at last we're in for a good soak;
My leaves were getting dusty, and my roots
Felt like a tired man's toes inside his boots!"

WILD FLOWERS

YELLOW Kingcup, is it true
That Fairie Kings drink out of you,
Golden Kingcup full of dew?
"My cup is filled," the flower replies,
"For Kings and Queens and butterflies."

Creeping scarlet Pimpernel,
With your closed or opened bell,
Do you shower and shine foretell?
"Low lying on the dusty grass,
I am the poor man's weather-glass."

Fiery Golans, you who glow
Like suns upon the marshes low,
From earth or heaven do you grow?

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"A giant dropped us from his car,
Flakes of the sun's own fire we are."

Daisy, with a yellow breast,
More beautiful than all the rest,
'Tis you can say who loves us best.
"I rise and spread beneath your feet,
In silver leaves, my portents sweet."
E.K.

CLOUDS

CURLY clouds of snowy white,
Fleecy islands in the light,
Prettier than cotton-wool,
Come and be my bed to-night.
E'en a king would not disdain
Golden cloud for counterpane,
White ones for the sheets so cool,
Pillows like a silken skein!

Oh! to sleep and dream, and wake
With the cloud's first morning shake,
Hear the broad Earth stir below,
Watch the shining daylight break!
Lying safe upon my cloud,
Feeling like a fairy proud,
Sailing softly I should go,
Singing like the larks aloud!

BENEATH THE SEA

WERE I a fish beneath the sea,
Shell-paved and pearl-brocaded,
Would you come down and live with me,
In groves by coral shaded?

No washing would we have to do;
Our cushions should be sponges
And many a great ship's envious crew
Should watch our merry plunges!

KING FASHION

THERE was a King of England once,
I shall not tell his name,
But what this King of England thought,
The people thought the same.

All that he said they listened to,
And called it wondrous wise;
On everything in earth or heaven
They looked with courtiers' eyes.

To every one of his commands
They said, "So let it be."
There never yet a monarch was
More absolute than he.

One day within his presence-hall
Two men stood forth together
One dressed in velvet and in gold,
The other clad in leather.

The King said to his people,
"Remember what you're told,
You may kick the man in leather,
You must kiss the man in gold."

Whilst on a country walk one day,
The King espied a frog.
"Why, here," said he, "I've found a most
Peculiar kind of dog!"

"He shall have meat for breakfast,
Of milk three saucers full,
A golden collar for his neck,
And a bed of cotton-wool."
Then every courtier kept a frog
And called it a peculiar dog!
E.K.

RIVER, RIVER

RIVER, river, running through the land,
Are you a traveller over foreign sand?
Are you a carrier from town to town,
River, river, as you hurry down?

Yes, I'm a carrier from town to town:
Here are ships with white sails, there are boats with brown,
What shall they bring you, what will you send?
I'll be your carrier to the land's end.

A HOUSE OF SWEETS

BUILD me a house of fairy ginger-bread,
Covered with candied fruits and sugarplums
Fruits that decay not when November comes
Sparkling and juicy, purple and gold and red.

Thatch me the roof with chips of cocoa-nut,
Sugared and white, as are December snows:
Around the eaves hang toffee-drops in rows.
With golden-syrup fill the water-butt.

Then in the flower garden dig deep wells
Of cowslip wine and bubbling lemonade;
Let the house walls with chocolate be laid,
And pave the floors with coloured caramels.

So, I contented there would often spend
My happy days, and give to every child
Bits of my house, for this, when'er they smiled,
Should of its own self grow again and mend!

AT NIGHT

SILENCE and night were in the air,
I heard their whispers everywhere;
And wind-breaths through the wall-flowers went
Like unseen bees in search of scent.
Deep in the sky some stars were burning,
And then I heard the round world turning!

THE RAINDROPS

SOME raindrops hung from a bar,
And they couldn't tell when to drop;
"The ground," said one, "is so far,
That I'm rather inclined to stop."

"Oh," sighed another, "the art
Consists in getting much rounder."
"I'm off!" cried one, with a start
Of blank amazement and wonder.

AUTUMN LEAVES

SWEEP the leaves together,
Yellow, brown and red,
Let us make a bonfire
Now that they are dead.

Chestnut leaves and beech leaves,
Ash and lime and oak,
Fir-cones and pine needles
Kindle into smoke.

Leaves that all the summer
Gave us cool and shade
What will be left of them
When our bonfire's made?

Only death-like ashes,
But from this same dust
Suns one day will fashion
Life anew, we trust.

THE STORY OF HYACINTH AND APOLLO

THE CHILD, THE SUN, AND THE WIND

IT chanced upon a summer's day,
Within a deep wood far away,
There wandered forth a little child

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Midst flowers and birds and breezes wild.

Now running here, now resting there,
As bright, as light, as free as air,
The happy little Hyacinth strayed,
From flower to flower, by sun and shade.

A wind called Zephyr saw him pass
With skipping feet across the grass,
And ran before and clung behind,
And strove his tripping feet to bind.

Because the Zephyr loved him so,
He would not let that fair child go,
But kept beseeching, "Stay, and be
A little playfellow to me!"

Still Hyacinth had naught to say,
Nor would he with the Zephyr stay,
But skipped aside and left the wind
Another playfellow to find.

And next the sun up in the air
Caught sight of Hyacinth's shining hair,
As Hyacinth ran the tall trees under,
And King Apollo paused in wonder.

"Stop! Hyacinth," cried King Apollo,
"You run too quick for me to follow;
One little minute wait for me,
And I your playfellow will be."

Because Apollo from the blue
Had fallen in love with Hyacinth too,
So down he came with smiling face
And stayed upon a mossy place.

There sun and child in merry play
Sported full many an hour away,
"Who can throw farthest, you or I?
This ring I'll cast, then you shall try."

But Zephyr, creeping round about,
Spied their pleasant pastime out,
Which made him angry feel and sore,
And he grew angrier more and more,

Until a cruel purpose grew,
And he determined what to do;
His wicked will at once consenting
Unto the crime of his inventing.

For as the King, in act to fling,
Raised high in air the iron ring,
Zephyr ran and took his stand
Just underneath Apollo's hand.

Thence blew the ring back swift and straight,
Steady and strong with all its weight,
So that it struck on Hyacinth's head,
And lo! the pretty child fell dead!

Then all about the leafy wood
There streamed out Hyacinth's purple blood,
Which wrote in letters sad and plain,
"Woe! Woe! for Hyacinth is slain!"

Back to the sky Apollo flew,
And far away the Zephyr blew;
But on the ground where Hyacinth died
Sweet flowers grew and multiplied.

Hyacinths that, with happy faces,
Still beautify earth's lonely places,
Loved by the sun and breezes wild,
In memory of the winsome child.
E.K.

IN THE FIELD

SHADE me, pretty buttercup,
Lift your golden goblet up;
I am only a poor spider,
Who has no one else to hide her:

Since my house was swept away
I've been wandering all day!

THE ARM-CHAIR

"**I AM** gouty," said the arm-chair
To the mantelpiece and fender,
"You would scarce perhaps believe it,
But my left foot is quite tender!"

"At our fancy ball last midnight
I could hardly step the lancers,
But the ladies were so pressing
They'd not take my 'Noes' for answers!"

"There was little round Miss Table,
As charming as she's pretty;
And the lovely Lady Fire Screen,
To refuse her what a pity!"

"Then my dear friend, Sophy Cushion,
In her graceful frills and flounces;
Oh what turns we've had together,
Though the spiteful say she bounces!"

"But my dancing days are over,
All my days of fun and chatter;
I must be content to sit here
And discuss more solid matter."

Here the mantelpiece and fender,
By the fireside (as their choice is),
In the praise of quiet converse,
To console him raised their voices.

WHO IS THAT SINGING?

WHO is that singing up in the chimney?
Who is that whistling through the bare trees?
That is the wind who flies as he listeth,
That is the wind whom nobody sees.

THE SAILOR

THE sailor comes from over seas,
From lands where we have never been,
Where flowers are strange, and strange the trees
Such golden fruit amongst the green!
The birds wear rainbows in their wings,
What fire and flash, what shine and sheen,
They seem too fine for mortal things!
Gay are the songs the sailor sings
When home he comes from over seas.

OLE LUK-OIE

A PICTURE hung beside my bed,
Wherein the boat was painted red,
And in the blue sea and rusty frame
From day to day were just the same,
Till one night Ole Luk-Oie spread
His big umbrella o'er my head.

And then like magic swift and strange
Within the picture came a change
It seemed as if the sea took breath,
The clouds awoke, as though from death,
The fisherman bent to his oar,
And the small boat drew near the shore.

The waves foamed white upon the sands,
Some children ran and clapped their hands,
And little ships from far away
Came sailing towards the painted bay;
All this and such-like wondrous things
Ole Luk-Oie's umbrella brings!

MY FATHER IS EXTREMELY TALL

MY father is extremely tall
When he stands upright like a wall
But I am very short and small.
Yet I am growing, so they say,
A little taller every day
It's not enough to notice it,
Except when dresses will not fit,
And Nurse says, "Let it down a bit."

PRETTY MOUSE

PRETTY mouse, I like to see
Your sparkling eyes look up at me!
Did you leave your home so snug
That I might see you on the rug?

I almost think you came to play
Because I'm not quite well to-day;
You cannot speak, I'm sure it's true,
And it was very kind of you.

You need not start so, silly mouse,
There's not a cat in all the house!
Besides, you see, I've shut the door,
So you can run all round the floor.

Come hither, and a morsel take
Of this most delicious cake.
You won't what do you mean to say,
Twisting your nose in **that** queer way?

You don't believe the cake is nice?
I'm sure it's much too good for mice!
What, you won't taste it! Well, then, don't,
But I shall eat it if you won't.

Ah! now the crumbs are falling fast,
So you've changed your mind at last,
And hither run in scrambling haste,
That you may have a little taste.

But, mouse, I'm quite ashamed to see
You eating crumbs so greedily!
If you go on so fast, you will
Most certainly be very ill.

You've had enough you're going back
To your small home behind the crack.
Why are you taking that large crumb?
No doubt to give your children some.

Dear mouse then see I'll give you more,
Here's a large crumb before your door.
There now pull harder pull it through,
And call your friends to feast with you.
E.K.

MY FINGERS

MY lady-like First Finger looks
Extremely grave when up alone
As though she said, "Now mind your books,
And let your work be nicely done."

My Thumb's a sturdy little chap,
He has no wish to grow up tall,
And says he doesn't care a rap,
Although he's shortest of them all.

A DREAM

LAST night when I was fast asleep,
Who do you think ran after me?
But A, B, C, each holding hands
It was the strangest sight to see!

A danced a jig on nimble feet,
Fat B sat down upon the bed,
And C, to show what he could do,
Turned round and stood upon his head!

In blank surprise I stared at them
How odd the dancing letters seemed!
And then I rubbed my eyes and woke,
And knew that I had only dreamed!

RESOLUTIONS

LET us try to be good and content,
Kind to each other,
Healthy and gentle and brave,
Obedient to Mother.

For of such were the heroes of old
Patient in learning,
Seldom rude, seldom cross, never cruel,
From the truth never turning.

A PENNY AND A PURSE

A PENNY murmured to a purse:
"You feel so nice and smooth and warm
I have stayed in many worse,
Lacking comfort, wanting charm.

"I've passed my life with all degrees,
In wondrous journeys to and fro
And tales of hardship or of ease
You ask a penny he will know!

"I can tell you, Purse, my friend,
Many weary weeks I've lain
Wondering if the need to spend,
E'er would speed me forth again!

"Then as fate would have it so,
Ten times in a single day,
I've changed owners, until, oh!
I'd have given worlds to stay.

"I've made my bed upon the floor,
In children's pockets have I slept
And once when I was all her store
A woman, parting with me, wept.

"A silent witness I have been,
Of life and death, of laughter, tears;
And here a word and there a scene
Will linger in my mind for years."

And so the penny to the purse
(Until with sleep his eyes grew dim)
Did thus of many things converse,
And then the purse told me of him.

I'D BE AN OUTLAW

I'D be an outlaw brave and bold
Rather than have a house of gold!
Better than learning rules and verbs
To be a wild witch charming herbs,
But ah! indeed we're always told
Men do not now as once of old:

And she's the truest heroine
Whose heart is steadfast and serene,
Who does not grumble, but sits still
And learns her lessons with a will:
This is the best, the only way
To grow brave for some greater day!

SOME OTHER CHILD

DEAR Father, I am very glad
I was the little girl you had!
Suppose some other child had come
To live inside my pleasant home,
To run and climb upon your knee
Some other child who was not me
Would you have called her by my name
And thought about her just the same?

THE TRAVELLER

THE traveller stopped, and, throwing down the reins,
Jumped from his seat;
He blew his nails, the cold was in his veins
And nipped his feet.

A lonely house stood nigh upon the hill,
And here he asked
For meat and bread, a shelter from the chill
Of that night's blast.

The countryman stared at the traveller's face;
"Come, wife," called he,
"Give him our best, but bless my soul, this place
Would starve a flea.

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"Our best indeed is naught but hard black bread,
A scanty store!"
"Unbridle me my milk–white goats," then said
The traveller, Thor.

"For I will kill them and a feast will make
For every one;
But bid your children not to lose or break
A single bone."

"I wonder why," thought Thialfi, the son,
And as they ate
He found a bone, a very little one,
Upon his plate:

"There can't be any harm in breaking this
To suck the marrow
Such lots of bones! if one should go amiss,
A goat's no sparrow!"

Next day the children woke in haste to see
The traveller start:
"Now bring the goat–skins and the bones to me,
And fetch my cart."

Then over the dry bones the traveller stood
And whispered low;
Thialfi muttered, "Why, what is the good?"
Then he cried, "Oh o o!!"

For by the cart there stood two milk–white goats
Alive and well,
Both sleek and trim with smooth and glossy coats
And tinkling bell.

But ah! why is it that one goes so lame
Across the grass,
What greedy little boy have we to blame?
Alas, alas!

Then fell Thialfi on his trembling knees,
"Oh, Sir," he cried,

I'D BE AN OUTLAW

"I broke the bone, but oh, forgive me, please!"
Kind Thor replied:

"Since you have told the truth, nor tried to lie,
You shall go free."
A lesson to us all in "wondering why,"
Then let this be.

RESPONSIBILITY

EACH thought I think, each little word I say,
Goes travelling outwards far and far away,
And like a bottle drifting on the sea,
None know whereat its landing-place will be.

THE RAINBOW

CAN that fairy place be found
Where the rainbow touches ground?
Will you tell me, driver, pray,
Is it many miles away?

Somewhere there must be a spot
Shining like a coloured blot,
Pink and purple, blue and green,
Like a transformation scene.

What must all the cattle think
When the grass and flowers turn pink?
Woolly sheep, what do you do
When the daisied field shines blue?

Happy must those children be,
Who the rainbow's end can see,
Who can play and dance and sing
In the rainbow's shining ring!

BLACKBERRIES

IN the garden strawberries grow,
Where anybody may not go,
But blackberries grow by the road,
Where all may get a basket-load;

So, little children, take your fill
Then carry homewards what you will.

WISHES

O GIVE me the ears of a fairy
To hear the trees growing,
The greeting of ants and of earwigs;
To hearken the lowing
Of tiny green cattle in grass woods
Where wee winds are blowing.

O give me ears of a giant
To hear the sun thunder
Along space, to list the moon coming,
The earth swinging under:
Ah! we hear not and see not, but thinking
Fills life up with wonder!

THE MOON

THERE is a lovely lady,
Whom I have often seen,
She's fair and bright and beautiful,
And she was born a queen.

She looks both mild and gentle,
Though she lives in regal state,
And her attendant nobles
In countless myriads wait.

Her mien is humble, and with them
Her dignity she shares,
She would not that her lustrous eye
Should dim the light of theirs.

Upon the ground her beaming smiles
And blessings fall unheard,
She kisses every folded flower
And every silent bird.

If, when we draw our curtains,
We draw them not too tight,

She steals a glance into our room
And wishes us good-night!
E.K.

THE SHEPHERD BOY

THE farmer's shepherd boy is Bill:
Across the fields he drives the sheep,
And where the long road winds uphill,
Like little summer clouds they creep.

And Bill is like the gentle wind,
He whistles softly as he goes,
He calls them where he has a mind,
And never uses threats or blows.

THE WIND

THE wind sat idle all day long,
No work to do had he,
He hummed aloud a tuneless song
That passed from tree to tree In sighs, sang he.

The wind sat idle till the night,
Then flew by field and town:
The listening children caught no sight
Of fleeting beard, or brownAnd windy gown.

Like teeth that chatter with the cold
Shake startled window-panes,
Flicker the lamps whose flames grow bold;
The old house door complainsIn dirge-like strains.

Was that but wind upon the stair?
How wild it is and dark!
Come near the fire, draw up your chair,
The chimney roars, and harkHow the dogs bark!

THE WINDMILL

"**I'M** busy now," the windmill said,
Waving his arms about his head;
"Don't interrupt me while I'm grinding

The flour to make the baker's bread."

TO THE CAT AT GRANDMAMA'S

A LETTER

DEAR CAT, I'm writing you this letter,
Which I shall send by post;
So, by-and-by, perhaps you'd better
Just say if it was lost.

I've got a nice large sheet of paper,
And, pussy what d'you think!
Some sealing-wax, a smart red taper,
And a real pen and ink!

Dear Cat, how sadly I **did** cry
When Nurse, I, and Papa
Where all obliged to say good-bye
To you and Grandmama.

I saw you on the steps, and John
Was standing at your side,
You watched us till we were quite gone,
Then, I suppose, **you** cried!

Oh! puss, I have been **so so** sad
These two last rainy days,
And I kept thinking how we had
Such dear, delicious plays,

You and I, pussy, in the hall,
Jumping upon the chairs,
Scrambling for my elastic ball,
Running half-way upstairs,

Until we met grave housemaid Jane
With dust-pan and with broom,
Who always sent us back again
To the warm drawing-room;

Enchanted Tulips and Other Verses for Children

And there, before the tea-bell rang,
We sat upon one stool,
Whilst you purred, pussy, and I sang,
Or else we played at school.

I taught you that two paws were two,
And twice two paws were four,
And tried to make you count your claws, but you
Would stick them in the floor!

And so you never got to be
As wise as you were bid
At least I was surprised to see
One evening what you did

John brought the kettle in and stept
With a black shining boot
Between us, when you, pussy, leapt
And fastened on his foot.

You thought it was a rat, but oh!
When I had told you that
If John had fifty feet or so,
They couldn't make one rat!

What cream we had for tea that night,
What games with cotton reels;
But no, puss, it upsets me quite,
One can't help what one feels.

I'm crying now, so here I'll end,
Dear Cat best love to you
Believe me, your own little friend, EMILY FORTESCUE.
E.K.

TO EMILY AT HER OWN HOME, FROM THE CAT

DEAR EMILY, your letter came
Directed right to me,
And when John took it at the door,
A puzzled man was he

Enchanted Tulips and Other Verses for Children

"A letter for the Cat! why, such
A thing was never heard!"
Then Jane came out and looked, and long
The two together purred.

I do not think they were quite pleased
Such honour should be done
To me for Jane laughed loud and said,
"It's just Miss Emmie's fun;

"I'll take it to her Grandmama,"
And then though right before
Her feet I stood she hurried on,
And shut the parlour door

Right in my face I could have scratched
And torn the parlour mat,
Only that would have been too like
A common, vulgar cat,

Which I am not as well you know.
I waited patiently,
And soon I heard dear Grandmama
Calling aloud for me.

"Open the door for Puss," said she;
I sprang upon her knee;
Then, quite out loud, she kindly read
Your lovely note to me.

And all the while I purred and purred,
Or softly said, "Mew, mew";
With grown-up people in the room
'Twas all that I could do

To show how, at each friendly word,
My cat's heart swelled with pride;
And yet some sadness came therewith,
The news that you had cried.

I did not cry in Cat-dom we
Don't think it etiquette

TO EMILY AT HER OWN HOME, FROM THE CAT

Enchanted Tulips and Other Verses for Children

To wash our faces when we grieve,
And make our whiskers wet.

Yet none the less I truly shared
The sadness of the house;
I think 'twas a whole week before
I'd heart to catch a mouse.

I even thought the cream was sour,
I lost my appetite,
I caterwauled upon the roof
So dismally at night

That spiteful neighbour Green sent in
(He's a low taste for dogs)
And begged that Grandmama would put
My feet in walnut clogs!

I grew morose, I spat at John,
Put up my back at Jane,
But your kind letter makes me feel
A happy cat again.

When you come back in Spring, I'll learn
To count my paws, and you
Perhaps might condescend to try
A few things **I** can do.

Your way of climbing up a wall
Strikes me as not the thing,
And though you're nimble, you might take
A lesson how to spring.

What's more, if you are not above
Hearing a cat's advice,
In time you might be brought to feel
More justly about mice.

You've hurt my feelings now and then,
But I forgive you that
So count among your warmest friends
Your Grandmama's GREY CAT.
A.K.

TO EMILY AT HER OWN HOME, FROM THE CAT

IN THE WOOD

SAID the rabbits to the foxglove,
"Don't you wish that you could scramble
In and out of lofty hedges,
Shady bracken, trailing bramble?"

"When our play-time is beginning,
And the grasses make long shadows,
Don't you wish that you could join us
Cutting capers in the meadows?"

THE STEAM-ENGINE

THROUGH the night and through the day
The great steam-engine wends his way:
Unswerving, swift, he shall not stray
Though labyrinths of metal thread
Their shining lines before him spread,
And lights are changing green and red!

The great steam-engine tears along,
Of iron and flame, broad-breasted, strong,
His speed is as the eagle's, on
Past startled plain and mountain-height,
This bold embodiment of might
With flame and thunder rends the night!

THE TRAIN

"**I PAUSE**," said the train, "As the Signalman bade
I pause in the dark: is my Driver afraid?
Alight all inside me, my passengers read
Or sleepily nod, when I tremble with speed.

"My Driver upstanding keeps watch through the dark
Does he notice me throwing out spark upon spark?
Does my Driver indeed see just as I do,
And spell the new names of the towns we pass through?"

"Great eyes glare upon us, green, yellow, and red
Strange shapes in the banks our night fancies have bred!
My skin is of iron, my nerves are of steel,

But how does my warm-blooded man-driver feel?"

THE TICKET COLLECTOR

THE people come, the people go,
The ticket man stands there,
The trains rush in and out below,
And some one steps aside to know
How much his extra fare?

None stay to look at anything,
But each alone intent,
Passes with haste or measured swing,
And thinking of a different thing,
Walks up the dark ascent.

O ticket man, the sky is bright
With golden floods of sun
Not yours that wide, blue, radiant sight;
Here business jostles out the light
And night and day are one!

CUCKOO-FLOWERS AND DAISIES

CUCKOO-FLOWERS and daisies,
Grasses grey with dew,
Sunbeams of buttercups,
And a sky all blue.

Primroses and cowslips,
Bluebells and sweet may,
And a cuckoo calling
Far, far away.

Forget-me-nots and cresses,
In the streamlet blue,
Fly a little nearer,
O Cuckoo, do!

A RETROSPECT

O GOOD old days of highwaymen,
Of outlaws hid in moor and fen,

Enchanted Tulips and Other Verses for Children

Of elf or goblin in the glen,
When dragons crawled and men were men!

How sad it is to sit and know
That we can never backwards go!
Time in its solemn even flow
Forgets the arrow and the bow

Forgets the days of sword and shield
How one would rather die than yield,
At tourneys how the trumpets pealed,
And horse and rider plunged and reeled. . . .

The moonlight still is pale and wan,
The same sun shines that's always shone,
Yet all these things are past and gone,
And won't come back for thinking on.

TO FORTITUDE

SHALL I be afraid to tread
Where great warriors have led
Warriors whose only sword
Was their dauntless, truthful word?
If they suffered, so will I,
And, like them, work patiently:
Fortitude, by thy good grace
I trust I shall not turn my face!

COUNT OTTO OF HEMPENFELDT

OLD Count Otto of Hempenfeldt,
Within the city where he dwelt,
Justice unto the people dealt,
Long may his bones lie easy!

'Twas when the land was in its prime
(And this was in Count Otto's time),
The dwarf-folk last were known to climb
The castle slope together.

The moonbeams smote the castle keep,
While all within lay sound asleep;

TO FORTITUDE

Enchanted Tulips and Other Verses for Children

Count Otto drew breath long and deep,
His brave hound stretched beside him;

When suddenly the Count awoke,
And saw before his chest of oak
A tiny figure in a cloak,
A peaked hat and a feather!

"Good Count," the little dwarf-man said,
"Swear to me by the holy dead,
Thy lands, thy castle, and thy head,
To do what I shall ask thee!"

The Count replied, "My little man,
I'll surely help thee if I can
Yet bring me no harm or evil ban
On me or those about me."

Then said the dwarf, "Good and not harm
Shall follow it no evil charm."
Count Otto leant back on his arm;
"Say your request," he answered.

The dwarf replied, "To-morrow night
All mortals must be out of sight,
Be you in bed by candle-light,
And leave the great door open.

"To-morrow is our festival,
Your kitchens and your spacious hall
Give leave to us to use them all
And you will not regret it."

Next night, soon as the sun was down,
Each maid had doffed her woollen gown,
Each page and groom, courtier, or clown
Had sunk their heads in slumber.

None saw how through the forest oaks
Came crowds of tiny, ugly folks,
No mortal eye beheld their jokes
Within that silent castle.

No traces did they leave behind,
And some declare 'twas but the wind
Or vainer fancies of the mind
Filled that dark night with laughter.

But from that day Count Otto's sheep
No lightning struck: his cellars deep
Were stored with wines. His nights in sleep,
His days in health passed quietly.

Still stands the town where once he dwelt
And justice to the people dealt,
Good Otto, Count of Hempenfeldt,
Long may his bones lie easy!

BEFORE THE FIRE

FIRE and smoke and darkness,
And smoke and flame and fire,
Caves and rocks and phantoms
After the mind's desire.

Flames, where are you going?
Why do you hurry by?
Dark and drear and lonely
Out of doors is the sky.

THE SINGING CHILDREN

GLADLY marching two and two,
Keeping time as soldiers do,
Waving banner, beating drum,
Here the singing children come!

Clean and happy, good and neat,
What sight for all the street!
Smiling mothers, come and see,
Here's an army brave and free

Whose unlessoned fearless feet
Need not yet to learn retreat:
Waving banner, beating drum,

Here the singing children come!

STAND STILL AND WATCH

STAND still and watch the clock's grave face,
The hands go round an even pace,
The hands go round, and though so slow,
In vain we try to see them go!
But watch that long black hand again,
Did you not see it moving then
In tiny jerks from space to space?

O bright moon rising full and round,
I watch you leave the level ground
You pass the tops of houses, trees,
I see you mounting over these;
The stars themselves your progress prove
In vain I watch to see you move
No single jerk, as yet, I've found!

BIRTHDAYS

WHEN birthdays come, we always write
Our names upon the nursery door,
And carefully we mark the height,
Each standing shoeless on the floor.

How strange to think birthdays will be
When we shall never add one more
To all those marks which gradually
Are climbing up the nursery door!

WINTER

ONE late November eve I stood
Beneath an old oak tree,
And every one of its yellow leaves
Said something sad to me.
"We're tired, we're old," they moaned, "and the wind
Pinches us cruelly!"

The fields looked very bare and still;
The river rippling near
A word to the willows whispered

STAND STILL AND WATCH

Enchanted Tulips and Other Verses for Children

That made them quake for fear,
While every withered blade of grass
Hung heavy with a tear.

The cattle crouched beneath the hedge;
The poor sheep never stirred;
In safest shelter of the wood
Sat silent every bird;
Only the rooks, in flying home,
Made their hoarse voices heard.

I thought the Vale so smiling once
In anger seemed to frown,
And wondering what this meant, I looked
Across the fallows brown
To the far hills, and thence I saw
Old Winter coming down.

He was not very near but well
That figure gaunt I know;
His robe was made of woven mist,
His cap of folded snow.
I heard the rattling of his bones,
With cold they shivered so.

His face was withered, stern, and pale,
His fingers long and thin,
A lantern 'neath his mantle held
The Northern Lights within;
And prisoned winds in his monstrous bag
Set up a fearful din.

The trees of the forest saw, and tossed
Their arms high in the air,
The leaves fell quivering to the ground
And left the branches bare.
The flowers shut their eyes at once
And died in mute despair.

The river hurrying to the sea
Stood still in sheer affright,
Valley and hill sent wildly up
To Heaven a long good-night.
Winter, ere morn, will bury them
In a shroud of ghostly white!

STAND STILL AND WATCH

A.K.

A SNAIL

A **SNAIL** crept up the lily's stalk:
"How nice and smooth," said he;
"It's quite a pleasant evening walk,
And just the thing for me!"

SETHON

KING SETHON of Egypt
Cried out in his woe,
"My kingdom will perish,
My race be brought low.

"Ruthless Sennacherib
With warriors draws near
To conquer our country
With arrow and spear.

"Our men are a handful;
In vain we contend;
Vain, vain is our struggle
But short be the end!"

Beneath the clear starlight
Of Egypt he stood,
The invaders' camp stretched
Far away like a wood;

When lo! through the stillness
Arose a strange sound,
A scratching and scraping
Came up from the ground.

And thick as when corn-blades
Each leaps forth a tongue,
Some thousands of field-mice
From the warm soil sprung.

They scrambled up palings

A SNAIL

Enchanted Tulips and Other Verses for Children

And scaled pediments
They sped past King Sethon
To the enemies' tents.

And there helter-skelter,
They seized on the quivers,
They nibbled the bowstrings,
Bit into shivers

The wooden shield-handles
The enemies used,
Who woke in the morning
Surprised and confused!

Without arms, defenceless,
They fled fast before
The happy Egyptians,
And came back no more.

Then a statue of Sethon
Was made very grand
A crown on his head and
A mouse in his hand!

FATHER

OUT in the morning Father goes,
Whether it pours with rain or snows,
Whether the wild wind beats and blows:
By the fire sit Mother and I
Doing our lessons quietly.

Back in the twilight Father comes,
When I've finished with books and sums.
Not all the noise of all the drums
Is a jollier noise, **I** know,
Than Father when he says, "Hallo!"

FAIRYLAND

A FAIRY'S house stands in a wood,
Midst fairy trees and flowers,
Where daisies sing like little birds

Enchanted Tulips and Other Verses for Children

Between the sun and showers,
And grasses whisper tiny things
About this world of ours.

Such flowers are there beside the way,
Lilies and hollyhocks:
Blow off their stalks to tell the time
Tall dandelion clocks;
While harebells ring an hourly chime
Like a wound music-box.

Some day shall we two try to find
This strange enchanted place?
Go hand in hand through flower-lit woods
Where living trees embrace
And suddenly, as in a dream,
Behold a fairy's face!

NIGHT

NIGHT like a coverlet is folded down
Upon the hills, and now the gentle trees
Rock in their arms the restless winds to sleep.
Cassiopeia, the Great Bear, and the Crown
Divide the sky with striding Hercules.
Her silent watch the pointed moon doth keep;
I, in my cosy bed, lie still and wonder
What makes the world turn round and stirs the thunder.

A BEETLE TALE

"**O COME**," the elder beetle said,
"For every one is safe in bed,
'Tis time to seek our nightly bread."
Then forth he crept with stealthy tread.

The clock ticked on you would not deem
Aught could have broke that peace supreme,
The children slept, they scarce did dream,
The young moon cast a fitful gleam.

From crack and cranny beetles crept;
In black and polished coats they stept
Upon that floor, which Jane had swept.

NIGHT

Enchanted Tulips and Other Verses for Children

Ah me! how fast those children slept!

The elder beetle scratched his head
And thought a moment then he said:
"Follow me, children, and be fed."
Forth to the larder door he led.

The Cook turned in her sleep too late!
She should have covered with a plate
The dish that none shall save from fate;
She dreams the clock is striking eight!

But ah! not yet the night has run,
Not yet appears the morning sun
Cook's handiwork is soon undone,
The tarts are eaten every one!

THE WAITER

BRILLIANT with mirrors, dim with crimson light,
Gorgeous with gold, with marble statues wan,
This was our dining-room, and here upon
The velvet chairs we all sat down that night We dined with Uncle John.

To many men the trump of battle calls,
Others in books seek their felicity,
No blame to them, indeed, but oh to be
A gracious waiter in those shining halls Were bliss enough for me!

A LIKENESS

A LADY in a picture once I saw
Who reminded me of Mother
Now book and picture show me her no more,
And I cannot find another.

Then should I try to draw her on my slate?
I believe there is no other
In all the picture-books at any rate
None so beautiful as Mother.

THE SNOW QUEEN

WHERE the wild bear clasps the ice
Over the hanging precipice,
Where the glittering icebergs shine
Within the sunset, red as wine,
Where the reindeer lick the snow,
To see what there may be below,
Where the shades are blue and green,
There lives, they say, the great Snow Queen.

Wild her eyes are as the sea
When northern winds blow lustily.
Her queenly robes are white as snow,
But flaming diamonds on them glow,
And many a precious stone.
Of green ice builded is her throne:
Polar bears her watch-dogs are
Her only lamp, an evening star.

TWILIGHT

THE shadows deepen so you cannot see
Within the corners of the nursery;
Across the ceiling dim they dance and leap,
And stealthily along the floor they creep,
Only the teacups standing on the table
Bear each a shining fleck, a red fire label.

THE LITTLE BROWN DWARF

IT WAS the mother Margaret,
To her daughter fair she said:
"Come now, my child, and listen to me,
Come stand beside my bed.

"No father thou, nor brother hast,
Thine uncle is hard and cruel,
Though he have wealth and we be poor,
Nor bread he gives nor fuel.

"But go thou now and say to him
That I am nigh to death;
Make haste, my child, and soon return,

Enchanted Tulips and Other Verses for Children

For short am I of breath."

And it was Lisa, her little daughter,
Out in the snow she went,
The cold stung like a living thing,
Hungry was she and spent.

And it was Lisa, her little daughter,
That sought the mountain-path;
She found her uncle, the wicked man,
Beside his blazing hearth.

Then did she weep and pray to him
That to her mother now,
Who lay so cold and near to death,
Some kindness he would show.

And it was her uncle, the cruel man,
In wrath he rose and cried:
"Sooner than give thee aught, my girl,
I'd blast my own hill-side

"Now get thee gone and come no more";
Then Lisa fled in tears,
She took the downward path towards home,
His hard words in her ears.

And it was Kastler, the little brown dwarf,
Who stood in Lisa's way,
And fast she would have fled from him,
But "Soft," he bade her, "Stay;

"I've heard yon bad man's words," said he;
"Go to thy mother dear,
These herbs will take her ills away,
This cheese last many a year."

Then did he give her herbs and cheese,
The little kind brown dwarf!
He patted Lisa's cold blue cheek,
And skipped off with a laugh.

And it was Lisa, her little daughter,
Mother Margaret saw come in;
Soon as she tasted of the herbs
To heal she did begin.

And then good mother Margaret
She went to the cottage door,
"Good lack," she cried, "thine uncle's fields
On the hill-side are no more.

"Naught's there but rubbish and blasted rock
Where grass grew green anon!"
And it was Kastler, the little brown dwarf,
They fell a-thinking on.

SWINGING

SWING me up and swing me down,
Swing me up towards the sky
Swinging is like being blown,
Blow me up and let me fly,
Like a piece of thistle-down
Swing me up towards the sky!

LEFT ALONE

MY cousins are gone out to walk,
Mama is called away,
And in Aunt Mary's drawing-room
I must not romp or play.

The door is shut, I cannot reach
To open it, and yet
I'm not afraid, because I know
Mama will not forget.

I will not kick the door, or scream,
Or make a foolish noise,
I'll try to be contented, though
I have not got my toys.

The blazing fire that burns so bright

I must not come too near,
Nor must I touch the pretty things
Upon the chiffonier.

Stay, there's one pleasant thing to do,
I never knew it fail
I'll get the great old picture–book
And tell myself a tale.
A.K.

A FLY

COME and see this busy fly
Rub his skinny hands together,
Now he stops and wonders whether
He feels clean again and dry.

Is it to the left or right,
The way back to the window–pane?
He thinks he'll go and dance again,
He feels so tidied up and bright!

THE POSTMAN

THE postman has a weary face
His step is weary too,
But is it Mary Jane, or Grace,
Or Minnie, is it you
The postman looks so kindly at?
I fear it is not me!
The postman smiles and lifts his hat,
Oh dear, who can it be?

THREADING A NEEDLE

SURELY I think Nurse has forgotten
How hard it is to thread this cotton
It is so very long ago
Since she was small like me and slow
Thread, needle, thread, Nurse says I must do it
Dear Nurse, indeed the cotton won't come through it!

TO A BEE

BUSY Bee, busy Bee, where are you going?
Down where the blue-bells are budding and blowing,
There I shall find something hidden and sweet
That all little children are willing to eat!
Busy Bee, busy Bee, what will you do?
Put it into my pocket, and save it for you!

WHO BLOWS YOU OUT?

O LITTLE round and yellow moon,
Why have you lit yourself so soon?
Jane won't bring in the lamp for me,
She says it's light enough to see!

Perhaps you did not know the time,
But don't you hear the church clocks chime?
Who blows you out, I wonder, when
The shining day comes back again?

ENCHANTED TULIPS

TULIPS white and tulips red,
Sweeter than a violet bed!
Say, old Mother Bailey, say
Why your tulips look so gay,
Why they smell so sweet, and why
They bloom on when others die?

"By the pixies' magic power
Do my tulips always flower,
By the pixies' magic spell
Do they give so sweet a smell!
Tulips, tulips, red and white,
Fill the pixies with delight!

"Pixy women, pixy men,
Seek my tulips from the glen;
Midnight come, they may be heard
Singing sweet as any bird,
Singing their wee babes to rest
In the tulips they love best!"

THE HALL PORTER

O WILLIAM, aren't you very tired
Of always standing at the door,
Opening and shutting when required:
Your fate you surely must deplore,
And long at times for something more?

But very smart and grand you look,
I heard Louisa say to Jane
She never had been quite so took!
Yet would I not your place retain
For all the praises one might gain!

THE ILLNESS

"**DON'T** rap me quite so hard," said the Green Door,
"I never felt so sharp a knock before!"
"Good door, I'm in a hurry, don't you see?
And some one must be quick and answer me
Our little boy has just been taken ill,
He ate too many ices, too much cake
I've come to ask the doctor for a pill
Nasty enough to cure his stomach-ache!"

RHYS AT THE FAIRY DANCE

RHYS and David hastened home,
For the night was well-nigh come,
And their tired and heavy tread
Woke the birds who'd gone to bed.

The tired moon leaned on the hill,
Tired, the soft wind had grown still,
Bats and beetles were about,
And the stars peeped shyly out,

When Rhys stopped and said, "Why, hark!
Who is singing like a lark?
Listen! for more joyful things
Never woke from fiddle-strings!

"It were madness to pass by

Enchanted Tulips and Other Verses for Children

Such a sweet festivity.
Dance I must, and dance I will
Go you, David, up the hill!"

"Stay!" cried David, struck with fear,
"There's no music in my ear
I hear nothing but the call
Of you valley's waterfall!"

Ah! too late, poor Rhys was gone;
David shouted, but went on.
When in bed, uneasy dreams
Crossed his sleep with evil gleams.

David saw Rhys all that night
Dancing by a shady light,
Dancing while he seemed to sing,
Dancing in a fairy ring!

Crowds of little folk were there
(Strange their faces, wild their hair)
Singing, dancing hand-in-hand,
As they do in fairyland!

David woke from sleep at last,
But his wild dreams held him fast;
So he dressed and hastened out,
Hoping to see Rhys about.

Carefully he searched the hill,
Thinking Rhys might lie there still,
Sleeping under hedge or wall.
There was no sign of him at all!

But they found a ring of grass,
Green as mountain-ash it was,
And the mark of tiny heels
Showed where elves had trod their reels!

Though many a year has passed away,
None have seen Rhys since that day!
Does he dance and does he sing
For ever in a Fairy Ring?

THE PRIMROSE

THE primrose murmured to the wind,
"Drink in my fair scent, and go
And tell the child you left behind,
Where I and hidden violets grow.

"Tell him the squirrels leap the boughs,
The woodpecker goes tap, tap, tap!
While baby rabbits sit and browse
Upon the green turf's mossy lap.

"Tell him that scarlet toadstools stain
The silent pathways through the wood,
The spider weaves a jewelled chain,
The busy ant's abroad for food.

"Then bid him" said the primrose, "come
To sing with us, and work and play,
To hear the wild bee's pleasant hum,
And be contented all the day."

A CAKE

COOK'S made a cake and such a cake!
Outside it is as white as snow,
And oh, how long it took to bake,
We thought the time would never go!

It is for Tommy's birthday feast,
And Margery, and Will, and Fanny
Will help to eat it all, at least
We will save some for Nurse and Annie.

JACK FROST

NOW listen: Once upon a time,
There lived a foolish boy,
Who would not be contented
With any pretty toy.

But one thing he did wish for,

Enchanted Tulips and Other Verses for Children

You'll think it very droll
For sure enough he wanted
To see the great North Pole.

He rode upon a donkey,
Once in the summer weather,
These two fit companions
Went on their way together.

They travelled through great deserts,
And forests that were greater;
They waded through the seas, and then
Jumped over the Equator.

And so they journeyed Northward,
A long, long, weary way;
It was a toilsome journey
For the longest summer day.

At last they reached the great North Pole,
And it, with age, was white;
To see it there so stiff and still
It was a wondrous sight.

Then, foolish boy, he touched it
With one finger only one
But quickly he repented
What he had rashly done!

For three tall icebergs round him,
Each shook its great white head,
And then there were no icebergs there,
But three tall men instead.

"Foolish little boy," said one,
"You shall be always cold."
The second said, "And you shall live
Till you are very old."

The third said, "You may tremble,
For all we say is true,
And everything you breathe upon
Shall be as cold as you."

And so it is we always know
When that little boy is near,
And when our lips are pinched and blue,
We say, "Jack Frost is here."

He walks about at nightfall,
And kills the poor field-mice;
He breathes upon the rivers,
And they are turned to ice.

He passes through our gardens,
We see where he has been,
For every little blade of grass
Is white instead of green;

And if a foolish snowdrop
Lifts up too soon its head,
He holds it in his prickly hand
Till the little thing is dead.

He stays here all the winter,
Sometimes till almost May,
Then come the gentle summer winds
And blow him quite away.
E.K.

THE HAPPY ENDING

WHAT time the sunset lightens Oxford Street,
And bright and red dull eyes and faces shine,
When cab and motor-bus the London fleet
Stream homewards in a long, scarce broken line,
The happy ending of the day is come,
And tired fathers turn their thoughts t'wards home!

TO FATHER CHRISTMAS

FATHER CHRISTMAS, will you please
Bring us lots of books and toys,
Fill our stockings, deck the trees
With all sorts of shining joys,
So that every child who sees
Makes a loud and happy noise!

Come with merry sound of bells
Breaking through our midnight sleep,
Rousing hamlets, citadels,
Prompting little heads to peep
If they see you, no one tells,
'Tis a secret that we keep.

Come with snowy coverlet,
Spread it over field and town
When the hasty sun is set,
And the night drops softly down;
Little children don't forget
Your rosy face and holly crown!

WHEN THE GREAT WIND

WHEN the great wind goes panting round the world,
Licking the seas, and sniffing through the lands,
I, in my bed, am lying closely curled,
Thinking of all that no one understands,
When the great wind goes panting round the world!

GOOD-BYE

GOOD-BYE, sweet day you will return no more,
Nor bring again that change of shade and sun;
Whatever future days may have in store,
This tranquil life of thine is spent and done. Good-bye, sweet day, then, if it must be so, But let me thank you once before you go.

All I have thought and done is past yet stays
Unalterable now, sealed fast and set;
The future's mine to mould, the wise man says,
By what is past remains 'tis we forget. Grant that I may in strength and wisdom grow To love each day that comes, and use it so.