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BY  
MAY  
RILEY  
SMITH



A  
GIFT  
OF  
GENTIANAS

AND OTHER POEMS

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CHRISTMAS ROSES.



# A GIFT OF GENTIAN

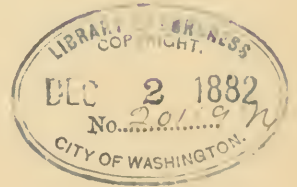
AND

## OTHER VERSES

BY

MAY RILEY SMITH

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY WM. ST. JOHN HARPER AND THEO. ROBINSON  
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EDWARD O. JENKINS,  
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To him whose praises make my heart more vain  
Than any recompense my life can know ;  
Whose patient hands, through every doubt and pain,  
Make easy places where my feet may go ;  
And, to the child, whose life has been to me  
The sweetest flower my bosom ever wore ;  
Whose little elbow leans upon my knee—  
The lightest burden mother ever bore !  
To these, the sharers of my household throne,  
Whose names within my prayers together stand,  
I dedicate what always is their own,  
The pleasant labor of my unskilled hand.



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A GIFT OF GENTIAN.



THOU timid, fluttering things, whose  
fringes rare  
Are dipped in colors drawn from  
babies' eyes ;  
Whose robe of gossamer is spun  
of air,  
In the same loom with June's  
delicious skies :  
Whose dainty hems, and skirts so  
silken fine,  
The fairies trust no awkward brush to trace ;  
I almost marvel that, with added line,  
A mortal's hand could paint thy flower-face !

*A GIFT OF GENTIANAS.*

But knowest thou not the one who sought thee out

    Holds in his palm a magic strong and fine,

That with a subtler grace can wrap about

    E'en so divinely fair a form as thine?

And so, with glad obeisance do I greet,

    Our first acquaintance, tender, blue-eyed things!

For with a benediction good and sweet,

    Thou foldedst in my hands thy feathery wings.

And from this day thy azure wells shall be

    The mirror of a face so true and good,

Thy sweet suggestions can but be to me

    The impulse to a better womanhood!



TIRED MOTHERS.



LITTLE elbow leans upon your knee,  
Your tired knee, that has so much to bear ;  
A child's dear eyes are looking lovingly

From underneath a thatch of shining hair :  
Perhaps you do not heed the velvet touch  
Of warm, moist fingers, folding yours so tight,  
You do not prize this blessing overmuch—  
You almost are too tired to pray, to-night !

But it *is* blessedness ! A year ago  
I did not see it as I do to-day,  
We are so dull and thankless ; and too slow  
To catch the sunshine e'er it slips away.

*TIRED MOTHERS.*

And now it seems surpassing strange to me,  
That while I wore the badge of motherhood,  
I did not kiss more oft and tenderly  
The little child that brought me only good !

And if some night when you sit down to rest,  
You miss this elbow from your tired knee ;  
This restless, curling head from off your breast,  
This lisping tongue that chatters constantly ;  
If from your own the dimpled hand had slipped,  
And ne'er would nestle in your palm again ;  
If the white feet into their grave had tripped,  
I could not blame you for your heartache then !

I wonder so that mothers ever fret  
At little children, clinging to their gown ;  
Or that the footprints, when the days are wet,  
Are ever black enough to make them frown !

*TIRED MOTHERS.*

If I could find a little muddy boot,  
Or cap, or jacket, on my chamber floor ;  
If I could kiss a rosy, restless foot,  
And hear its music in my home once more ;

If I could mend a broken cart to-day,  
To-morrow make a kite to reach the sky  
There is no woman in God's world could say  
She was more blissfully content than I.

But, ah ! the dainty pillow next my own  
Is never rumpled by a shining head ;  
My singing birdling from its nest is flown—  
The little boy I used to kiss is dead !

HE KNOWS BEST.



I F I could utter some new magic word  
To lull the pain in one poor troubled soul :  
Or when Bethesda's shining pool is stirred  
Could lift some cripple in and make him whole ;  
If I could set some bruised and tired feet  
Where they could henceforth tread a smoother way :  
I would not ask a gift more fair and sweet,  
To bless me on this happy Christmas day.

If where life's lilies grow most white and tall,  
I could but hide each tender little child ;  
Away from cold and dreary rains that fall,  
From contact with the sinful and defiled ;

*HE KNOWS BEST.*

Away from rugged paths, where briars tear  
The tender flesh of their small, rosy feet ;  
Or shield one little life from sin and care,  
I think my Christmas gift would be complete !

Ah, foolish heart, be still ! Nor any more  
Distrust the tenderness that is divine !  
He knows wherever feet are bruised and sore,  
And gives them pity, gentler far than thine.  
Our keenest sorrow may be sent to bring  
The dearest guest our life has ever known,—  
Sweet patience, who in gathering the sting  
From other's lives, forgets about her own.

And there are *old* sweet words of truth and love,  
As full of meaning as a mother's kiss,  
Which fall like benedictions from above,  
And never weary in a world like this.

*HE KNOWS BEST.*

Bethesda's pool is nearer than we think,  
It springs wherever there are tired feet ;  
The gift you crave lies trembling on its brink,  
You still may make your Christmas day complete !

And if God wills that even baby feet  
Shall feel the sharpness of life's toilsome way,  
Be sure that recompense most full and sweet  
Is waiting for these little ones some day.  
And though it may be hard to understand  
The way through which He leads your life and mine,  
May we not safely trust the gracious hand  
That brings to us so good a Christmas time ?

A POMPEIAN PREACHER.



EAR, dainty little "Maiden Hair,"

Whose slender figure, trim and fair,

Apparelled in the softest green,

Seems fit for court of faerie queen ;

I marvel much that without fear

Your tender life finds shelter here,

Where silence, death, and grim decay

Stalk like pale phantoms day by day !

No little child with dancing feet,

Embroiders, by its presence sweet,

*A POMPELIAN PREACHER.*

A thread of grace within the gloom  
That curtains every silent room.

The sunshine with its soft, warm feet  
Shrinks back from the unfriendly street,  
And God's free light steals through the doors  
And shivers on the mosaic floors!

The timid lizard noiseless glides,  
The slothful snail in calm abides ;  
But nothing that is fresh or fair  
Dwells here save thee, dear Maiden Hair!

The place where thou dost choose to be  
Was once a hall of equity ;  
A court where Justice, stern and cold,  
Untouched by Mercy, ruled of old.



*A POMPEIAN PREACHER.*

Too delicate art thou and fair,  
To dwell in such a chilling air ;  
And yet, within these ruins gray,  
Thou livest thy perfect life today.

Thou art a preacher, sweet and good,  
And this low niche where thou hast stood,  
Thy pulpit, from whose tiny walls  
A sermon, quaint and earnest, falls.

Oh, patient lives that sunless are,  
From whom bright fortune stands afar !  
Thou camest not to thy present state  
By any careless chance ; but Fate,

Whose name is God, hath planned it so,  
With kinder forethought than we know !

*A POMPEIAN PREACHER.*

And if athwart thy web of gray,  
Thou runnest no brightness day by day,

Be sure thou hast not wrought so well  
As this shy flower, whose name I tell ;—  
This dweller in Pompeian air—  
My little preacher, “ Maiden Hair ! ”



## THE RAIN.



HE brooks leaped up to catch it,  
And the breezes held their breath ;  
The lilies sprang up boldly  
And shook their heads at death.  
The roses blushed to crimson  
At the kisses of the rain ;  
And the sun looked out and saw it  
With a flush of jealous pain.

*THE RAIN.*

The thirsty little river,  
    Through the faded grass that led,  
Began to flash and sparkle  
    Like a chain of silver thread.  
It tinkled through the meadow  
    Where the unraked clover lay,  
Lifting its rosy blossoms,  
    As the rain-king passed that way.

It left its fragrant blessing  
    Along the dingy street,  
It cooled the heated pavement  
    For the tread of tired feet ;  
It stole within the chamber  
    Where a sick one longed for death,  
And filled the slender nostrils  
    With the health of its balmy breath !

*THE RAIN.*

It laid on the fluttering pulses  
    The hand of a wondrous calm,  
And poured on the quivering eyelids  
    A sweet and slumberous balm ;  
It drew from the feverish forehead  
    The burning arrows of pain,  
And the tired watchers slumbered  
    At the word of the blessed rain !

“ LOST—A GIRL.”



H, say ! have you seen my Alice  
Anywhere on Life's street,  
Among the army of children  
Everywhere that you meet ?  
Her hair was in yellow tangles,  
There were prints of sweets on her face,  
She spoke in a broken language,  
And lisped with a child's rare grace.

Has nobody seen this hoyden,  
This queer little girl in blue,  
With a rent in her wee white apron  
And a gap in each scarlet shoe ?

*"LOST—A GIRL."*

Her shoe-strings were always dangling,  
And her stockings sure to be  
Loosed, and showing the dimples  
Set in each rosy knee.

If angels had stolen our Alice  
Away from her life of play ;  
If under a matting of daisies  
We had hidden our girl away ;  
If I could know she had loitered  
The Heavenly gateway through,  
I should think some day to find her,  
My little daughter in blue.

The birds have learned to answer  
When her name I sadly call,  
But the voice of my little truant  
Is silent, in room and hall.

"LOST--A GIRL."

I see a beautiful *woman*  
With my grandchild at her knee,  
But my little heedless Alice  
Will never come back to me!



“SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME  
UNTO ME.”



T was long years ago that He uttered  
This message, so tender and sweet,  
And women were crowding about Him  
And laying their babes at His feet.  
He looked, with a gentle compassion,  
On the mothers who knelt at His knee,  
And He comforted them with this saying,  
“ Let the little ones come unto me.”

From over the hills of Judea,  
Down through the long line of the years,  
That Voice of ineffable sweetness  
Still comforts the mother's sad tears.

*"SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN."*

O Heart that has bled for our sorrows '

O Voice that can quiet the sea !

Come often to *me* with Thy whisper :

" Let the little ones come unto me ! "

O mothers, whose children are lying

Out under the snow and the rain,

Let the beautiful words of the Master

Give ease to your sorrow and pain !

He holds their bright heads on His bosom,

He gathers them close to His knee,

And tenderly still He is saying,

" Let the little ones come unto me ! "

## A LITTLE PILLOW



LITTLE pillow, do you think,  
With your frills and bows of pink,  
You can faithful be and true,  
To the trust I give to you?  
In your laces, here and there,  
I have stitched a silent prayer  
For the little child, whose face  
Soon will give a needed grace  
To the work my hands have wrought  
With full many a tender thought.

Underneath each knot of pink  
Hides a sleepy elf, I think,

*A LITTLE PILLOW.*

Who, with tricks so sly and wise,  
Fastens down the baby's eyes ;  
Wraps him round from brow to feet,  
With a rest so soft and sweet,  
That he cries in grieved surprise,  
When he opens wide his eyes,  
Just because he can not keep  
All the treasures of his sleep !

To each feather soft and white  
I have whispered dreams so light,  
That the baby's sleep will be  
Full of peace and purity.  
What though velvet cheek and lips,  
With their rosiness eclipse  
Every touch of puny skill,  
I have wrought with loving will ?

*A LITTLE PILLOW.*

How *could* anything compare  
With a baby fresh and fair?  
How *could* God's work, pure and fine,  
Ever harmonize with mine?

Little pillow, do you think,  
With your frills and bows of pink,  
You can faithful be, and true  
To the trust I give to you?

THE CHILD THAT BELONGS TO ME.



O pure is  
my child,  
that I dare  
to say  
His Ma-  
ker would  
not de-  
spise  
To color  
the sky on  
some rare  
June day,

From the blue in his handsome eyes ;

*THE CHILD THAT BELONGS TO ME.*

And this is the sweetest thought there can be—  
This beautiful boy belongs to me !

Sometimes when we walk where the lily blows,  
    She frowns with a sullen grace ;  
And even the violet jealous grows  
    When my little one breathes in her face ;  
And the rose bends low in a courtesy  
To the beautiful boy that belongs to me.

His wonderful voice ! Oh, who can tell  
    Wherever he caught its note ?  
Not a whit less sweet than the mellow bell  
    That swings in the robin's throat :  
Is it strange that my heart overflows with glee  
When this sweet-voiced boy belongs to me ?

Whenever I go to the market-place  
    I carry him proud and high,

*THE CHILD THAT BELONGS TO ME.*

That all may catch a glimpse of his face  
    Before we have passed them by ;  
For I want the whole wide world to see  
That this beautiful boy belongs to me !

They tell me the world is a dreary place,  
    And heavily sown with tears ;  
But when I look in my child's dear face,  
    My heart is too glad for fears ;  
Glad, as the good Lord meant me to be,  
When He gave this beautiful boy to me !

Nor will I burden my days with sighs,  
    Lest God for my child should send ;  
For whether he lives or whether he dies,  
    He is mine till Eternity's end.  
And I fear no harm to baby or me,  
Since both, O Father, belong to Thee !



## SNOWFLAKES.



ON their errand of purity softly they go,  
A million fair doves from the clouds swoop-  
ing low !

They light in my window, and brood on my sill,  
With milky-white pinions down-folded and still.

They tenderly flutter through by-way and street,  
And fold their wings over each stain that they meet ;  
Until all the hedges, so ragged and bare,  
Seem dressed for a bridal resplendent and fair.

Our little brown cottage is battered and worn,  
Its hinges are rusty, its shutters are torn,

*SNOWFLAKES.*

But a beautiful hand through the dark, quiet night  
Has covered each roughness, and painted it white !

Oh, often I wish that some hand like the snow  
Would lay a white palm on our faults here below !  
Instead of the stain and the blackness, I ken,  
Our lives would bloom out into whiteness again !

IF WE KNEW.



If we knew the baby fingers  
    Pressed against the window-pane  
Would be cold and stiff to-morrow—

    Never trouble us again ;  
Would the bright eyes of our darling  
    Catch the frown upon our brow ?  
Would the prints of rosy fingers  
    Vex us then as they do now ?

Ah, these little ice-cold fingers,  
    How they point our memories back  
To the hasty words and actions  
    Strewn along our backward track !

*IF WE KNEW.*

How those little hands reminds us,  
As in snowy grace they lie,  
Not to scatter thorns—but roses—  
For our reaping by and by !

Strange we never prize the music  
Till the sweet-voiced bird has flown ;  
Strange that we should slight the violets  
Till the lovely flowers are gone ;  
Strange that summer skies and sunshine  
Never seem one-half so fair  
As when Winter's snowy pinions  
Shake their white down in the air !

Lips from which the seal of silence  
None but God can roll away,  
Never blossomed in such beauty  
As adorns the mouth to-day ;

*IF WE KNEW.*

And sweet words that freight our memory  
    With their beautiful perfume,  
Come to us in sweeter accents  
    Through the portals of the tomb.

Let us gather up the sunbeams  
    Lying all along our path ;  
Let us keep the wheat and roses,  
    Casting out the thorns and chaff ;  
Let us find our sweetest comfort  
    In the blessings of *to-day* ;  
With a patient hand removing  
    All the briars from our way.

MY LITTLE BOY.



HE old square clock had struck the hour of  
eight,

Outside the starry lamps were shining high,  
The silver moon in regal splendor sate

In the blue glory of the Christmas sky,  
And tired workers toiling homeward late  
Hummed Christmas carols as they plodded by.

My little boy was standing by my knee,  
One small white foot was bare upon the floor ;  
A pair of shining eyes were bent on me ;  
His face was eloquent with hopes in store,

*MY LITTLE BOY.*

For hanging by the chimney I could see  
The little fleecy sock my darling wore.

He had been telling me in eager speech  
Of all the treasures Santa Claus would bring ;  
There were no bounds his sweet faith could not reach,  
His trust was simple and unquestioning,  
While I had learned the whole that life could teach  
Of bitter doubt and cruel suffering !

I listened to him with a wistful prayer,  
I longed to make some helpful faith my own ;  
That into my poor life of grief and care  
Might creep a truer grace than it had known—  
Some blessed trust that would not prove a snare,  
Some love more honest than the world had shown.

And then I said, “ The Christmas is to me  
More sad, my boy, than you can understand :

*MY LITTLE BOY.*

It brings me gifts of pain and treachery,  
And deals them through a loved and trusted hand.  
It brings a broken truth my staff to be,  
And leaves me nothing that will hold or stand !”

My blessed child broke in upon my woe,  
Half loving, half reproachfully he said,  
“ You still have something left ; there's me, you know !  
Why, one might think your little boy was dead !  
I'm little now, but when I larger grow  
I will take care of you, mamma,” he said.

I caught him with a passionate surprise ;  
I covered him with kisses burning sweet !  
My life grew richer, looking in his eyes,  
Though other loves were poor and incomplete ;  
And praying God to make him good and wise,  
I tucked the cover soft about his feet.







And I bent my head in the rushes,  
And sobbed like a home-sick child.

COMING HOME.



HAVE come to the dear old threshold,  
With eager, hurrying feet,  
To scent the odorous lilies  
That once were so white and sweet.  
To taste the apricots mellow  
That crimson the garden wall ;  
To gather the golden pippins  
That down in the orchard fall.

I passed by the uncut hedges,  
And up through the thistled walk,  
And beside the fall of my footsteps  
There was only the crickets' talk.

*COMING HOME.*

The weeds grew high in the arbor,  
And the nettles, rank and tall,  
Had throttled the sweet-breathed lilies  
That leant on the latticed wall.

The little white house is empty,  
Its ceilings are cobwebbed o'er,  
And the dust and mold are lying  
Thick on the trackless floor.  
There are no prints in the doorway,  
No garments hung in the hall,  
And the ghosts of death and silence  
Sit and gloat over all !

No eager faces of children  
Brightened the window-pane,  
Never a peal of laughter  
Rippled along the lane ;

*COMING HOME.*

So I turned through the daisies yellow,  
    That nodded to see me pass,  
To seek for the mellow pippins  
    That dropped in the orchard grass.

But I found a worm in my apples,  
    And flung them sadly away,  
And the pool that I thought eternal  
    All foul and poisonous lay.  
A black snake crept from its hiding  
    And hissed in the marshes wild,  
And I bent my head in the rushes  
    And sobbed like a homesick child !

COMFORT.



If I could lay my hand upon the heart  
That moulders underneath the church-  
yard snows,  
And bid the sleeping pulses wake and start,  
And to the faded lips restore the rose ;

If I could lead the precious child you love  
With shrinking footsteps to his earthly place ;  
If I could bring him from the fold above,  
The tangled paths of life again to trace ;

Say ! would you bid him lay his glory by,  
That you might hold him to your troubled breast ?

*COMFORT.*

And would your yearning mother-heart deny  
The good to him, that you might thus be blest ?

I know your answer ! Tenderly enough  
Has God's sweet mercy through His smiting shone.  
Young feet are tender, and the way is rough ;  
Be glad that you can tread the thorns alone !

It is not long. The way is short between,  
And we are near the gates of pearl and gold,  
And yonder rise the hills of living green,  
Where children never die, nor yet grow old !

And when the storms shall beat, and rains shall fall,  
And when you faint beneath the sun's fierce ray,  
O friend, be glad ! and sing above it all,  
" My child is safe from all these ills to-day ! "

SOMETIME.



SOMETIME, when all life's lessons have been  
learned,  
And sun and stars forevermore have set,  
The things which our weak judgments here have  
spurned,

The things o'er which we grieved with lashes wet,  
Will flash before us, out of life's dark night,  
As stars shine most in deeper tints of blue ;  
And we shall see how all God's plans are right,  
And how what seemed reproof was love most true.

And we shall see how, while we frown and sigh,  
God's plans go on as best for you and me ;



*SOMETIME.*

How, when we called, He heeded not our cry,  
Because His wisdom to the end could see.  
And even as wise parents disallow  
Too much of sweet to craving babyhood,  
So God, perhaps, is keeping from us now  
Life's sweetest things, because it seemeth good.

And if, sometimes, commingled with life's wine,  
We find the wormwood, and rebel and shrink,  
Be sure a wiser hand than yours or mine  
Pours out this potion for our lips to drink.  
And if some friend we love is lying low,  
Where human kisses can not reach his face,  
Oh, do not blame the loving Father so,  
But wear your sorrow with obedient grace !

And you shall shortly know that lengthened breath  
Is not the sweetest gift God sends His friend.

*SOMETIME.*

And that, sometimes, the sable pall of death  
    Conceals the fairest boon His love can send.  
If we could push ajar the gates of life,  
    And stand within and all God's workings see,  
We could interpret all this doubt and strife,  
    And for each mystery could find a key !

But not to-day. Then be content, poor heart !  
    God's plans like lilies pure and white unfold.  
We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart,  
    Time will reveal the calyxes of gold.  
And if, through patient toil, we reach the land  
    Where tired feet, with sandals loosed, may rest,  
When we shall clearly see and understand,  
    I think that we will say, " God knew the best ! "

GOOD-BYE.



O-MORROW night, when the sun has hid  
His gold in the West away,  
And the flush of life has faded out  
From the beautiful face of day,  
I shall sit in the dusk alone,  
And you will be far away.

Perhaps we never shall meet again  
Till we lay life's burdens down ;  
Till our foreheads are bound by a belt of woe,  
Or clasped by a starry crown ;  
Till we feel the thrill of our Father's smile,  
Or tremble before His frown.

GOOD-BYE.

And should I reach the end of the road  
    Before your journey is done,  
I will stand and hark by the golden gate  
    Impatiently, till you come ;  
And when I have heard the fall of *your* foot,  
    My Heaven will be begun !

AURORA BOREALIS.



THE northern cheek of the heavens,  
By a sudden glory kissed,  
Blushed to the tint of roses,  
And hid in an amber mist.  
And through the northern pathway,  
Trailing her robe of flame,  
The queenly Borealis  
In her dazzling beauty came !

I stood and watched the tilting  
Of each dainty, rosy lance,  
As it seemed to pierce the bosom  
Of an emerald expanse ;

*AURORA BOREALIS.*

And I thought if Heaven's gateway  
Is so very fair to see,  
What must the inner glory  
Of the "many mansions" be?

I thought of the "Golden City,"  
Where the wondrous lights unfurl ;  
Of its sea of clearest crystal,  
Of its gates—each one a pearl ;  
Thought, till the glowing splendor  
Had quietly passed us by,  
And the track of Aurora's chariot  
Bleached out from the northern sky !



SOME VIOLETS.

Dear friend, I give  
thee violets ;  
And for my fee,

The fragrant secret  
of thy life  
Disclose to me.

*SOME VIOLETS.*

For through it, like a guiding thread,  
I scent the rue ;  
And faintly track the odorous feet  
Of heart's-ease, too.

Reach down on patient cords to me,  
Thy brimming cup  
Of wise, sweet thoughts, that I may drink,  
And thus toil up

To where thou art, so meekly high,  
So far away,  
I can but kiss my eager hands  
To thee to-day.

Or, if I may not reach so high,  
Then be it so ;  
If I may sit beside thy feet,  
'Twill not be low.



*SOME VIOLETS.*


And, listening soft, my soul may catch,  
    In some far sense,  
The tuneful impulse of a life  
    Serene, intense.

Ah, me ! I do but spoil my work  
    With clumsy phrase ;  
And mar, with my uncultured speech,  
    Where I would praise.

So I will lay my heart's-ease down  
    At thy kind feet ;  
Regretting sore their broken stems,  
    Their vanished sweet.

Yet praying that their faded blue  
    Some type may be  
Of the fair badge my heart shall wear  
    Always for thee !

“A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM.”

“HE land is wondrous fair,” the angel said.

“Its sapphire skies are wrought with  
tints of gold,

Its jewelled gates admit nor heat nor cold ;  
And all along the way that you shall tread  
A perfume marvelously sweet is shed,  
From lilies that eternally unfold.”

The lovely woman raised her timid face,  
And to the messenger of death she spoke :  
“I know that human sight can not invoke  
A vision of such fair, surpassing grace,  
As those fair mansions in the heavenly place,  
But life and I have never friendship broke.

*"A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM."*

"Therefore I fain would stay," she pleaded low.

The angel's face wore nothing of command ;

He smiling said, " Behold, unarmed I stand !

I left behind my arrows and my bow.

I shall not force you, lovely one, to go ;

I only wait till you shall clasp my hand.

" But even now your eyes are wet with tears :

Come where a holy hand will wipe them dry !

Oh, be my bride, my own beloved ! and I

Will kiss away your doubtings and your fears,

And lead you gently through the eternal years,

And prove a love that will not change or die !"

The woman shrank from his caressing hand.

" But life hath loyal love as well," she said ;

" A trusting heart would break if I were dead ;

A faithful foot would track me to your land,

*"A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM."*

And at the gates of pearl would waiting stand.

This life is fair and sweet to me," she said.

"The swaying reed hath not a frailer grace  
Than human love. It will not mourn you  
long ;  
In Heaven your voice is needed in the song.  
Through countless ages God has kept your place.  
Then, in my bosom hide your weeping face,  
And let me bear you to the waiting throng."

"Nay, nay, sweet angel ! Spare me this alarm ;  
For I am timid of the lonesome way.  
A voice I love is begging me to stay !  
A precious hand is clinging to my arm,—  
A hand that never brought me pain or harm !  
Oh, leave me now, and come another day !"

*"A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM."*

The angel drew her close and whispered sweet,

“Dear heart! the streets are fair with children  
there,

God’s sunlight hides its kisses in their hair,  
And everywhere in Heaven a child you meet.”

The woman clasped his hand, and toward the street

So bright with children, smiling went the pair.

OUR BOBBY WAS PINCHING THE KITTEN.



OUR Bobby was pinching the kitten,  
And kicking his primer about,  
And pulling a beetle to pieces,  
His face all awry in a pout ;  
His mamma, who, patient and loving,  
Could coax her dear Bobby no more,  
Now reached for the whip on the mantel—  
And looked at her boy on the floor.

But grandma, with soft, muslin kerchief  
Pinned over her warm, loving breast,  
Where ten little heads had been pillowed  
And rocked into childhood's sweet rest,

*OUR BOBBY WAS PINCHING THE KITTEN.*

Looked up from the little wool stocking  
Just finished and laid on her knee,  
And said, " Dear, you'll ruin his temper,  
You had far better let the child be.

" Don't whip him—his father before him  
Was punished and shut in the dark,  
And stood on one foot in the corner,  
And disciplined up to the mark ;  
We gave him no credit for honor,  
But watched him as spiders watch flies.  
And what did it teach him? Why, mainly  
To practice deceit and tell lies.

' We called it affection and duty—  
God knows we were fond of the boy—  
But I guess his remembrance of childhood  
Is not quite a well-spring of joy.

*OUR BOBBY WAS PINCHING THE KITTEN.*

So put up that willow whip, daughter,  
And try little Bobby once more.  
You see he's forgotten his passion,  
And lies half asleep on the floor."

Then grandmother lifted her darling,  
And patted his head on her breast,  
And sang in a tremulous treble,  
Till all Bobby's woes were at rest.  
And so the wee whip, bright and yellow,  
Was laid on the mantel again—  
And that is the way that the grandmas  
Spoil nine little boys out of ten.







And then with the rest of the flowers  
We left her to silence and sleep.

THE SLIGHTED FLOWERS.



HE slept ; and the dream of Heaven,  
With its beautiful surprise,  
Had folded the silken lashes,  
And fastened the tender eyes.  
And the peace which passeth knowledge,  
Lay like a ring of light,  
Fresh from the hand of the crowner  
On her brow, unlined and white.

She lay while we piled the lilies  
Like drifts of odorous snow  
On the breast, whose thoughts were whiter  
Than milkiest flowers that blow.

*THE SLIGHTED FLOWERS.*

But the lily dropped its petals  
    In vain, on the upturned face,  
And the idle hands unclasped not,  
    From the sloth of their folded grace.

Unfelt, were the scented kisses  
    Of the flowers that leant on her brow ;  
And she who had yearned for their coming,  
    Neglected to praise them now ;  
She slighted the dainty odors  
    Of violets, pallid and sweet,  
That lay like a track of beauty  
    From the brow to the unshod feet.

And she uttered no word of chiding,  
    When we crushed a rose in our hand ;  
So we knew by these silent tokens  
    She had gone to the unknown land.

*THE SLIGHTED FLOWERS.*

Then we kissed the hair on her forehead,  
And gathered a tress to keep ;  
And then with the rest of the flowers  
We left her to silence and sleep.

CHRISTMAS ROSES.



GAVE into a brown and tired hand  
A stem of roses, sweet and creamy white.  
I know the bells rang merry tunes that night,  
For it was Christmas time throughout the land,  
And all the skies were hung with lanterns bright.

The brown hand held my roses gracelessly ;  
They seemed more white within their dusky vase :  
A scarlet wave suffused the woman's face.  
“ My hands so seldom hold a flower,” said she,  
“ I think the lovely things feel out of place.”

*CHRISTMAS ROSES.*

Oh, tired hands that are unused to flowers !

Oh, feet that tread on nettles all the way !

God grant His peace may fold you round to-day,  
And cling in fragrance when these Christmas hours,  
With all their mirthfulness, have passed away !

THE BABY OVER THE WAY.



CROSS in my neighbor's window,

With its drapings of satin and lace,

I see, with its crown of ringlets,

A baby's innocent face.

His feet in their wee red slippers

Are tapping the polished glass,

And the crowd in the street look upward,

And nod and smile as they pass.

Just here in my cottage window,

Catching flies in the sun,

With a patch on his faded apron,

Stands my own little one.



*THE BABY OVER THE WAY.*

He is just as bright and handsome  
As the baby over the way,  
And he keeps my heart from breaking  
At my toiling every day.

Sometimes, when the day is ended,  
And I sit in the dusk to rest,  
With the face of my sleepy darling  
Close to my lonely breast,  
I pray that my neighbor's baby  
May not catch Heaven's roses all,  
But that some may crown the forehead  
Of *my* darling as they fall.

And when I draw the stocking  
From his little tired feet,  
And kiss the rosy dimples  
In his limbs so round and sweet,

*THE BABY OVER THE WAY.*

I think of the dainty garments  
Some little children wear,  
And frown that God withholds them  
From mine, so pure and fair !

May God forgive my envy,  
I knew not what I said !  
My heart is crushed and humbled ;  
My neighbor's boy is dead !  
I saw the little coffin  
As they carried it out to-day,  
And a mother's heart is breaking  
In the mansion over the way !

The light is fair in my window,  
The flowers bloom at my door ;  
My boy is chasing the sunbeams  
That dance on the cottage floor.

*THE BABY OVER THE WAY.*

The roses of health are crowning  
My darling's forehead to-day ;  
But baby is gone from the window  
Of the mansion over the way !



A FLOWER SERMON.



FOUND, within a church-yard gray,  
A marigold abloom one day,  
And hotly said, "O saucy elf,  
Shame on thy pert and graceless self  
To flaunt thy robes of yeilow bloom  
Among the shadows of the tomb,

*A FLOWER SERMON.*

And o'er the faces of the dead  
To nod thy disrespectful head !  
There is no fitness in thy dress,  
Nor art thou modest, thus to press  
Thy gaudy presence in the place  
Where gladness never shows its face."

The startled flower replied, " What blame  
Have I to borrow? Or what shame  
Should burn my cheeks, because I wear  
This yellow dress, which is my share  
Of Nature's brightness, given to grace  
The sombre shadows of this place?  
I can not harm the sleeping dead  
Because I toss my golden head ;  
'Tis all God meant for me to do,  
To nod and smile the Summer through.

*A FLOWER SERMON.*

Nor do I laugh while others weep  
Through any malice, but to keep  
God's perfect plan for my small life,  
Unmarred by dissonance or strife,  
For this I bloom beside a grave,  
And wear the color that He gave."

I turned my flushing face away ;  
Nor will I try another day  
To question any thought or plan  
That God designs for flower or man.  
Some lives are blithe their journey through,  
While others early find the rue.  
Whatever color God hath wrought  
Into our life, or plan, or thought,  
He knows the best. There is no flaw  
Nor dullness in God's perfect law !

MY MOTHER.



THE sweetest face in all the world to me,  
Set in a frame of shining silver hair,  
With eyes whose language is fidelity :  
This is my mother. Is she not most fair ?

Ten little heads have found their sweetest rest  
Upon the pillow of her loving breast :  
The world is wide ; yet nowhere does it keep  
So safe a haven, so secure a rest.

'Tis counted something great to be a queen,  
And bend a kingdom to a woman's will.

*MY MOTHER.*

To be a mother such as mine, I ween,  
Is something better and more noble still.

O mother! in the changeful years now flown,  
Since, as a child, I leant upon your knee,  
Life has not brought to me, nor fortune shown,  
Such tender love! such yearning sympathy!

Let fortune smile or frown, whiche'er she will;  
It matters not, I scorn her fickle ways!  
I never shall be quite bereft until  
I lose my mother's honest blame and praise!



I F .



I, sitting with this little worn-out shoe  
And scarlet stocking lying on my knee,  
I knew the careless feet had pattered through  
The pearl-set gates that lie 'twixt Heaven and me,  
And I could see beyond the mists of blue  
God's tender hand, I could submissive be.

If, in the morning, when the song of birds  
Reminds me of a music far more sweet,  
I listen for his pretty broken words  
And for the music of his dimpled feet,  
I could be almost happy, though I heard  
No answer, and but saw his vacant seat.

*IF.*

I could be glad, if, when the day is done,  
    And all its cares and heartaches laid away,  
I could look westward to the hidden sun,  
    And, with a heart full of sweet yearnings, say,  
“To-night I’m nearer to my little one  
    By just the travel of a single day.”

If I could know those little feet were shod  
    In sandals wrought of light in better lands,  
And that the foot-prints of a tender God  
    Ran side by side with his in golden sands,  
I could bow cheerfully and kiss the rod,  
    Since Benny was in wiser, safer hands.

If he had died, as little children do,  
    I would not stain the wee sock on my knee  
With bitter tears, nor kiss the empty shoe  
    And cry, “Bring back again my little boy to me!”

*IF.*

I could be patient, until patience grew  
Into the gladness of Eternity.

But oh, to know the feet once pure and white,  
The haunts of vice have boldly ventured in !  
The hands that should have battled for the right  
Have been wrung crimson in the clasp of sin !  
And should he knock at heaven's gate to-night,  
Alas my boy could scarce an entrance win !

HIS NAME.



WHEN I shall go where my Redeemer is,  
In the far City, on the other side,  
And at the threshold of His palaces  
Shall loose my sandals ever to abide,  
I know my Heavenly King will smiling wait  
To give me welcome as I touch the gate.

Oh, joy ! oh, bliss ! for I shall see His face,  
And wear His blessed Name upon my brow ;  
That Name which stands for pardon, love and grace,  
That Name before which every knee shall bow ;  
No music half so sweet can ever be,  
As that dear Name which He shall write for me.

*HIS NAME.*

Crowned with this royal signet I shall walk,  
    With lifted forehead through the eternal street,  
And with a holier mien and gentler talk,  
    Will tell my story to the friends I meet ;  
Of how the King did stoop His Name to write  
    Upon my brow in characters of light.

Then, till I go to meet my Father's smile,  
    I'll keep my forehead smooth from passion's scars ;  
From angry frowns that trample and defile,  
    And every sin that desecrates and mars,  
That I may lift a face unflushed with shame,  
    Whereon my Lord may write His holy Name !

F O U R .



H, wind of the sweet May morning!

Tell me the rarest thing,

The fittest for birth-day token,

That your rosy hands can bring.

Oh, army of loving mothers,

Lend me your counsel, pray,

And tell me a gift for a darling

Who is four years old to-day!

I have hunted the clover meadow

And the blossoming orchards through,

For a bit of the robin's crimson,

Or the jay-bird's dainty blue ;

*FOUR.*

But robin, at home with her babies,  
Was having a holiday,  
And when I made love to the blue-bird,  
She whistled and fluttered away.

And then I thought of the violet,  
Sweetest and best of them all,  
So I ran to catch the perfume  
That her purple cloak let fall ;  
But in vain did I try to gather  
What never a cup can hold,  
Though for every breath of fragrance  
You offer a world of gold.

I searched in the highest grasses  
For an echo of mellow song  
That the sweet thrush left behind her  
As she merrily flitted along ;

*FOUR.*

But she flew away to the rushes  
And hid in her own brown nest,  
And crooned to the little thrushes  
That twittered under her breast.

I sought for a gift uncommon.  
Oh, say, was I proud and wrong,  
To ask for the blue-bird's color,  
Or to seek to prison a song?  
Was it like a foolish mother  
To try in her hand to bring  
An odor of purple pansies,  
That sweet, intangible thing?

But stay! I have thought of a token!  
Surely I was not wise;  
Can you guess what gift I bring you,  
By the light that shines in my eyes?



*FOUR.*

'Tis your mother's love, my darling,  
And it knows no change, nor death,  
It is truer than bluejay's color,  
And sweeter than violets' breath!

Though you may not grasp nor hold it  
In the palm of your small brown hand,  
Yet you can carry its sweetness  
With you to the Better Land.  
Then, wind of the soft May morning,  
What have you that's sweeter to lay  
At the feet of a little darling  
Who is four years old to-day?

JAMIE'S PRAYER.



DAY'S weary burdens are laid by ;  
The world's great throbbing heart is still ;  
The stars flash out, the moon's fair face  
Rests on the peak of yonder hill.

I hear the katydids contend  
The rustling maple leaves among ;  
And leaning toward the apple boughs,  
I hear the robin brood her young.

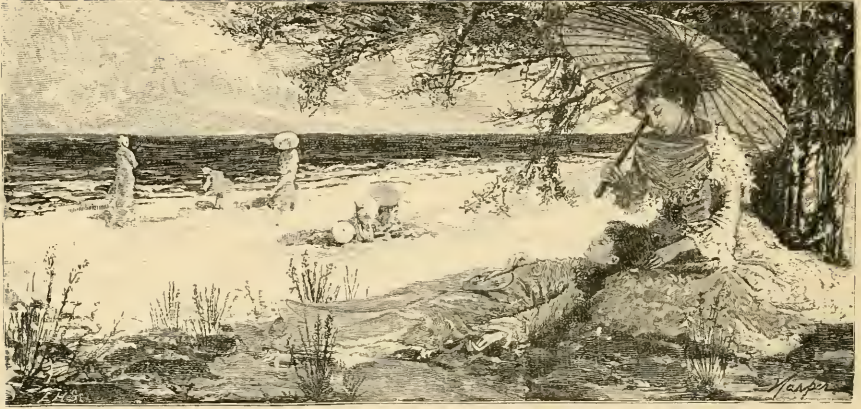
It is the hour when children's prayers,  
Like perfume from the lilies rise,  
When all the angels cry, " Oh, list !"  
And God makes silence in the skies.

*JAMIE'S PRAYER.*

Two small brown hands, unsoiled by sin,  
Are folded softly on my knee,  
And over them my child's dear head  
Is bowed in sweet humility.

Hark to the little honest prayer!  
“Dear God, I am too tired to pray,  
And 'taint as if you didn't know  
Just all I've said and done to-day.

“I know it takes a sight of love  
To make a boy's sins white, but then  
You don't go back on what you say  
And I am not afraid—Amen.”



### A PRAYER.



H, long strong breaths of salt sea air,  
Oh, north winds rough and south winds fair,  
Toss all your rosy gifts about,  
And blow afar our weary doubt !

Milk-white foam roses, break for me,  
From the green gardens of the sea.  
And bring thy fragrance, briny sweet,  
To wrap our love from brow to feet !

*A PRAYER.*

Bring rosy color to her mouth,  
And from the warm and humid South  
Waft spices to the fevered breath,  
And antidote the spell of death !

And from thy green o'erflowing cup  
My hand shall dip a potion up,  
And in thy wine, O blessed sea,  
With relish sweet I'll drink to thee !

Then kiss her back to health, kind sea,  
For all thy treasures can not be  
So fair, so costly as this pearl—  
This drooping lily of a girl !

CHRISTMAS EVE.



OD bless the little stockings  
All over the land to-night,  
Hung in the choicest corners  
In a glow of crimson light !  
The tiny scarlet stocking,  
With a hole in the heel and toe,  
Worn by wonderful journeys  
The darlings have had to go.

And heaven pity the children,  
Wherever their home may be,  
Who wake at the first gray dawning  
An empty stocking to see !

*CHRISTMAS EVE.*

Left in the faith of childhood  
Hanging against the wall,  
Just where the dazzling glory  
Of Santa's light will fall !

Alas, for the lonely mother  
Whose home is empty and still,  
Who has no scarlet stockings  
With childish toys to fill !  
Who sits in the swarthy twilight,  
With her face against the pane,  
And grieves for the little baby  
Whose grave lies out in the rain !

Oh, the empty shoes and stockings,  
Forever laid aside !  
Oh, the tangled, broken shoe-strings  
That will never more be tied !

*CHRISTMAS EVE.*

Oh, the little graves at the mercy  
Of the cold December rain !  
Oh, the feet in their snow-white sandals,  
That never can trip again !

But happier they who slumber,  
With marble at foot and head,  
Than the child who has no shelter,  
No raiment, nor food, nor bed.  
Yes ! heaven help the living !  
Children of want and pain,  
Knowing no fold nor pasture—  
Out to-night in the rain !



WAITING.



WHEN the crickets chirp in the evening  
And the stars flash out in the sky,  
I sit in my lonely doorway  
And watch the children go by ;  
I look at their fresh young faces,  
And hark to each merry word,  
For to me a child's own language  
Is the sweetest ever heard.

And so I sit in the doorway  
In the hour that I love the best,  
And think, as I see them passing,  
My child will come with the rest ;

*WAITING.*

Think, as I hear the clicking  
Of the little garden gate,  
My darling's hand is upon it—  
Oh, why has she come so late?

But the days have been slowly weaving  
Their warp of toil in my life ;  
The weeks have rolled on me their burden  
Of waiting and patience and strife ;  
The flowers that came with the sunshine  
Have finished their errand so sweet,  
And Autumn is dropping her harvests  
Mellow and ripe at my feet.

And yet my little girl comes not,  
And I think she has missed her way,  
And strayed from this cold, dark country  
To one of perpetual day.

*WAITING.*

I think that the angels have found her,  
And loving her well, as did we,  
Have begged the Good Father to keep her  
Right on through eternity.

Perhaps. But I long to enfold her,  
To tangle my hand in her hair,  
To feast my starved mouth on her kisses,  
To hear her light foot on the stair.  
I am but a poor selfish mother,  
And mother-hearts starve, though they know  
Their children are drinking the nectar  
From lilies in heaven that blow.

Some day I am sure I shall find her,  
But the road is so lonesome between,  
My spirit grows sick and impatient  
For a glimpse of the pastures so green ;

*WAITING.*

Till then I shall sit in the doorway,  
In the hour that my heart loves best,  
And think, when the children pass homeward,  
My child will come with the rest.

IN PRISON.



OD pity the wretched prisoners,  
In their lonely cells to-day,  
Whatever the sins that tripped them,  
God pity them, still I say.

Only a strip of sunshine,  
Cleft by rusty bars ;  
Only a patch of azure,  
Only a cluster of stars ;  
Only a barren future  
To starve their hope upon,  
Only stinging memories  
Of love and honor gone :

*IN PRISON.*

Only scorn from women,  
    Only hate from men,  
Only remorse to whisper  
    Of a life that might have been.

Once they were little children,  
    And perhaps their unstained feet  
Were led by a gentle mother  
    Toward the golden street ;  
Therefore, if in life's forest  
    They since have lost their way,  
For the sake of her who loved them,  
    God pity them, still I say.

O mothers, gone to heaven !  
    With earnest heart I ask  
That your eyes may not look earthward  
    On the failure of your task !

*IN PRISON.*

For even in those mansions  
The choking tears would rise,  
Though the fairest hand in Heaven  
Would wipe them from your eyes !

And you, who judge so harshly,  
Are you sure the stumbling-stone  
That tripped the feet of others  
Might not have bruised your own ?  
Are you sure the sad-faced angel  
Who writes our errors down,  
Will ascribe to you more honor  
Than to him on whom you frown ?

Or, if a steadier purpose  
Unto your life is given ;  
A stronger will to conquer,  
A smoother path to heaven ;

*IN PRISON.*

If, when temptations meet you,  
    You crush them with a smile ;  
If you can chain pale passion  
    And keep your lips from guile,  
  
Then bless the Hand that crowned you,  
    Remembering, as you go,  
'Twas not your own endeavor  
    That shaped your nature so ;  
And sneer not at the weakness  
    Which made a brother fall,  
For the hand that lifts the fallen  
    God loves the best of all !  
  
And pray for the wretched prisoners  
    All over the land to-day,  
That a holy Hand in pity  
    May wipe their guilt away.













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