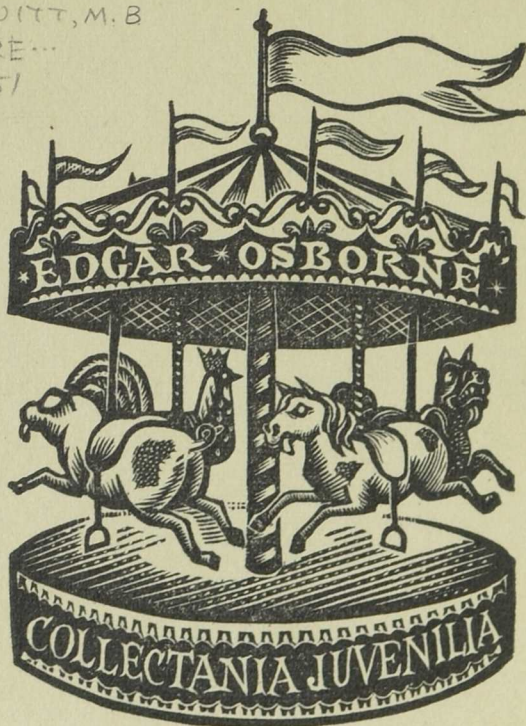


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HOWITT, M. B
FIRE...
1851



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Annie Gertrude Bateman

from Mrs Howitt.

Richmond - 1853.

FIRE-SIDE VERSES,

BY

MARY HOWITT,

AUTHOR OF "TALES IN VERSE," "TALES IN PROSE," "BIRDS AND FLOWERS,"
"SKETCHES IN NATURAL HISTORY," &c., &c.

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THE BLIND BOY AND HIS SISTER.

“OH brother,” said Fair Annie,
To the blind boy at her side ;
“Would thou could’st see the sunshine lie
On hill and valley, and the sky
Hung like a glorious canopy
O’er all things far and wide !

“Would thou could’st see the waters
In many a distant glen ;
The mountain flocks that graze around ;
Nay, even this patch of stony ground,
These crags, with silver lichen crowned,
I would that thou could’st ken !

“ Would thou could'st see my face, brother,
As well as I see thine ;
For always what I cannot see
It is but half a joy to me.
Brother, I often weep for thee,
Yet thou dost ne'er repine !”

“ And why should I repine, Annie ?”
Said the blind boy with a smile ;
“ I ken the blue sky and the grey ;
The sunny and the misty day ;
The moorland valley stretched away
For many and many a mile !

“ I ken the night and day, Annie,
For all ye may believe ;
And often in my spirit lies
A clear light as of mid-day skies ;
And splendours on my vision rise,
Like gorgeous hues of eve.

“ I sit upon the stone, Annie,
Beside our cottage door,
And people say, ‘ that boy is blind,’
And pity me, although I find
A world of beauty in my mind,
A never-ceasing store.

“ I hear you talk of mountains,
The beautiful, the grand ;
Of splintered peaks so grey and tall ;
Of lake, and glen, and waterfall ;
Of flowers and trees ;—I ken them all ;—
Their difference understand.

“ The harebell and the gowan
Are not alike to me,
Are different as the herd and flock,
The blasted pine-tree of the rock,
The waving birch, the broad, green oak,
The river and the sea.

“And oh, the heavenly music,
That as I sit alone,
Comes to mine inward sense as clear
As if the angel-voices were
Singing to harp and dulcimer
Before the mighty Throne !

“It is not as of outward sound,
Of breeze, or singing bird ;
But wondrous melody refined ;
A gift of God unto the blind ;
An inward harmony of mind,
By inward senses heard !

“And all the old-world stories
That neighbours tell o’ nights ;
Of fairies on the fairy mound,
Of brownies dwelling under ground,
Of elves careering round and round,
Of fays and water-sprites ;

“ All this to me is pleasantness,—

Is all a merry show !

I see the antic people play,—

Brownie and kelpie, elf and fay,

In a sweet country far away,

Yet where I seem to go.

“ But better far than this, Annie,

Is when thou read'st to me

Of the dear Saviour meek and kind,

And how he healed the lame and blind.

Am I not healed ?—for in my mind

His blessed form I see !

“ Oh, love is not of sight, Annie,

Is not of outward things ;

For, in my inmost soul I know,

His pity for all mortal woe ;

His words of love, spoke long ago,

Unseal its deepest spring !

“ Then do not mourn for me, Annie,
Because that I am blind ;
The beauty of all outward sight ;
The wondrous shows of day and night ;
All love, all faith, and all delight,
Are strong in heart and mind ! ”

THE BOY OF THE SOUTHERN ISLE.

AN OLD SEAMAN'S STORY.

PART I.

I'LL tell ye, if ye hearken now,
A thing that chanced to me—
It must be fifty years ago—
Upon the southern sea.

First mate was I of the Nancy,
A tight ship and a sound ;
We had made a prosperous voyage,
And then were homeward bound.

We were sailing on the Tropic seas,
Before the trade-wind's power ;
Day after day, without delay,
Full thirteen knots an hour.

The sea was as a glassy lake,
By a steady gale impressed ;
There was nought for any man to do
But just what liked him best.

And yet the calm was wearisome ;
The dull days idly sped ;
And sometimes on a flute I played,
Or else a book I read.

And dallying thus one afternoon,
I stood upon the deck ;
When far off, to the leeward,
I saw a faintish speck.

Whether 'twas rock, or fish, or cloud
At first I did not know ;
So I called unto a seaman,
That he might look also.

And as it neared, I saw for sure
That it must be a boat ;
But my fellow swore it was not so,
But a large bamboo afloat.

We called a third unto us then,
That he the sight might see ;
Then came a fourth, a fifth, a sixth,
But no two could agree.

“Nay, ’tis a little boat,” I said,
“And it roweth with an oar !”
But none of them could see it so,
All differing as before.

“It cometh on ; I see it plain ;
It is a boat !” I cried,
“A little boat o’erlaid with pearl,
And a little child to guide !”

And sure enough, a boat it was,
And workéd with an oar ;
But such a boat as ’twas, no man
Had ever seen before.

Within it sate a little child,
The fairest e’er was seen ;
His robes were like the amethyst,
His mantle of sea-green.

No covering wore he on his head,
And the hair that on it grew
Showered down in thick and wavy locks,
Of the sunniest golden hue.

The rudest man on board our ship
Blest God that sight to see ;
For me I could do nought but weep,
Such power had it on me.

There sat he in his pretty boat
Like an angel from the sky,
Regarding us in our great ship,
With wonder in his eye.

The little oar slid from his hand ;
His sweet lips were apart ;
Within my soul I felt his joy ;
His wonder in my heart.

And as we tokened him to come,
His little boat he neared,
And smiled at all our friendly words,
Nor seemed the least afeared.

“Come hither a-board!” the captain said;
And without fear of ill,
He sprang into the lordly ship,
With frank and free good will.

He was no son of the merman;
No syren full of guile;
But a creature like the cherubim,
From some unknown-of isle.

And strange to tell, his pleasant speech
Was English, every word;
And yet such English, sweet and pure,
As his I never heard.

There were three, he said, who dwelt with him
Within a tamarind grove ;
His parents and his sister young,—
A family of love.

His father, he said, had made his boat
From out a large sea-shell ;
“ And what a wondrous tale,” said he,
“ I shall this evening tell !”

His robes, he said, his mother had wove
From roots of an Indian tree :
And he laughed at the clothes the seamen wore,
With the merriest mockery.

When the little child had stayed with us,
May-be an hour or so,
He smiled farewell to all on board,
And said that he would go.

“For I must be back again,” said he,

“For me they all will wait ;

I must be back again,” quoth he,

“Or ever the day be late !”

“He shall not go !” the captain said ;

“Haul up his boat and oar !

The pretty boy shall sail with us

To the famous English shore !

“Thou shalt with me, my pretty boy ;

I’ll find thee a new mother ;—

I’ve children three at home, and thou

To them shalt be a brother !”

“Nay, nay, I shall go back !” he said ;

“For thee I do not know ;—

I must be back again,” he cried,

“Before the sun be low !”

Then sprang unto the vessel’s side,

And made as he would go.

The captain was a strong, stern man ;
None liked him over well ;
And to a seaman standing near,
Said he, with voice and look austere,
“ Haul up yon cockle-shell !
And you, my boy, content you,
In this good ship to dwell ! ”

As one who gladly would believe
Some awful threat a joke,
So heard the child, with half a smile,
The words the captain spoke.

But when he saw them seize his boat,
And put his oar away,
The smile was gone, and o'er his face
Quick passed a pale dismay.

And then a passion seized his frame,
As if he were possessed ;
He stamped his little feet in rage,
And smote upon his breast.

'Twas a wicked deed as e'er was done—
I longed to set him free ;
And the impotence of his great grief
Was a grievous sight to me.

At length, when rage had spent itself,
His lofty heart gave way,
And, falling on his pretty knees,
At the captain's feet he lay.

“ Oh take me back again ! ” he cried,
“ Let me not tarry here,
And I'll give thee sea-apples,
And honey rich and clear ;

“ And fetch thee heavy pearl-stones
From deep sea-caves below ;
And red tree-gold and coral-tree,
If thou wilt let me go !

“Or if I must abide with thee,—
In thy great ship to dwell,
Let me but just go back again,
To bid them all farewell!”

And at the word “farewell” he wept,
As if his heart would break ;
The very memory of his tears
Sore sad my heart doth make.

The captain’s self was almost moved,
To hear his woful cry ;
And there was not within the ship
One man whose eyes were dry.

When the captain saw the seamen’s grief,
An angry man was he,
And shut his heart against the child,
For our great sympathy.

Down from the deck he took him
To his cabin all alone ;
We saw him not for many a day,
But only heard his moan.

PART II.

It was a wicked deed, and heaven
All wickedness doth hate ;
And vengeance on the oppressor,
It cometh soon or late,—
As you will see. There something was,
Even from the very night
Whereon the captain stole the child,
On board that was not right.
From out the cabin evermore,
Where they were all alone,
We heard, oh piteous sounds to hear,
A low and quiet moan ;
And now and then cries sad enough
To move a heart of stone.

The captain had a conscious look,
Like one who doeth wrong,
And yet who striveth all the time
Against a conscience strong.

The seamen did not work at all
With a good will or a free ;
And the ship, as she were sullen too,
Went slowly over the sea.
’Twas then the captain from below
Sent up in haste for me.

I found him lying on his bed,
Oppressed with fever pain ;
And by his death-struck face, I saw
That he would not rise again,—
That he, so lately hale and strong,
Would never rise again.

“ I have done wickedly,” said he,
“ And Christ doth me condemn ;
I have children three on land,” groaned he,
“ And woe will come to them !

“ I have been weighed, and wanting found ;
I’ve done an evil deed !

I pray thee, mate, ’tis not too late,
Take back this child with speed !

“ I have children three,” again groaned he,
“ And I pray that this be done !—

Thou wilt have order of the ship
When I am dead and gone :—

I pray thee do the thing I ask,
That mercy may be won !”

I vowed to do the thing he asked,
Upon the Testament ;

And, true enough, that very day
To his account he went.

I took the little child away,
And set him on my knee,
In the free fresh air upon the deck,
But he spoke no word to me.

I feared at first that all his grief
Had robbed him of his speech,
And that I ne'er by word or look,
His sunken soul could reach.

At length he woke from that dead woe,
Like one that long hath slept,
And cast his arms about my neck,
And long and freely wept.

I clasped him close unto my breast,
Yet knew not what to say,
To wile from him the misery,
That on his spirit lay.

At length I did bethink me
Of Jesus Christ ; and spake
To that poor lamb of all the woe
He suffered for our sake.

“For me and thee, dear child,” I said,

“He suffered, and be sure
He will not lay a pang on thee
Without he give the cure !”

Like as the heavy clouds of night
Pass from the coming day,
So cleared the sullen weight of woe
From his dear soul away.

Oh happy hours of converse sweet ;—
The Christian’s hope he knew,
And with an eager heart he gained
That knowledge sweet and new.

And ever by my side he kept,
Loving, and meek, and still :—
But never more to him returned
His bold and wayward will :—
He had been tried and purified
From every taint of ill.

PART III.

THE eve whereon the captain died

I turned the ship about,

And said unto the seamen good,

“We’ll find the island out.”

So back unto the place we came,

Where we the child had found ;

And two full days, with anxious watch,

We sailed it all around.

And on the third, at break of day,

A far-off peak was seen ;

And then the lowlands rose to view,

All woody, rich, and green.

Down on his knees the child he fell,

When the mountains came in view,

And tears ran streaming from his eyes,—

For his own isle he knew.

And with a wildly-piercing tone,
He cried, "Oh mother dear,
Weep not,—I come, my mother!"
Long, long ere she could hear.

And soon we saw a mountain-top,
Whereon a beacon burned ;
Then as the good ship neared the land,
An answer was returned.

"Oh give to me my boat!" he cried,
"And give to me mine oar!"
Just then he saw another boat
Pushed from the island-shore.

A carved boat of sandal wood,
Its sail a silken mat,
All richly wrought in rainbow-dyes,
And three within her sat.

Down from the ship into the sea
The little boy he sprung ;
And the mother gave a scream of joy,
With which the island rung.

Like some sea-creature beautiful,
He swam the ocean-tide,
And ere we wondered at his skill,
He clomb the shallop's side.

Next moment in his mother's arms
He lay, O sweet embrace ;
Looking from her dear bosom up
Into her loving face.

The happiest and the sweetest sight
That e'er mine eyes will see,
Was the coming back of this poor child
Unto his family !

—Now wot ye of his parentage ?

Sometime I'll tell you it :

Of meaner matter many a time

Has many a book been writ.

'Twould make a pleasant history

Of joy, scarce touched by woe,

Of innocence and love ; but now

This only must you know.

His mother was of English birth,

Well-born, and young, and fair ;

In the wreck of an East-Indiaman

She had been savéd there.

His father was the island's chief,

Goodly as man can be ;

Adam, methinks, in Paradise

Was such a one as he.

'Tis not for my weak speech to tell
The joy so sweet and good,
Of these kind, simple islanders,
Nor all their gratitude.

Whate'er the island held they gave ;
Delicious fruits and wines,
Rich-tinted shells from out the sea,
And ore from out their mines.

But I might not stay ; and that same day
Again we turned about,
And, with the wind that changed then,
Went from the harbour out.

—'Tis joy to do an upright deed ;
'Tis joy to do a kind ;
And the best reward of virtuous deeds
Is the peace of one's own mind.

But a blessing great went with the ship,
And with the freight she bore ;
The pearl-shells turned to great account
So did the island's ore ;—
But I someway lost my reckoning,
Nor found the island more.

And how the child became a man,
Or what to him befel,
As I never trod the island more,
Is not for me to tell.

LITTLE CHILDREN.

SPORTING through the forest wide ;
Playing by the water side :
Wandering o'er the heathy fells ;
Down within the woodland dells ;
All among the mountains wild,
Dwelleth many a little child !
In the baron's hall of pride ;
By the poor man's dull fireside ;
'Mid the mighty, 'mid the mean,
Little children may be seen,
Like the flowers that spring up fair,
Bright and countless, everywhere !

In the far isles of the main ;
In the desert's lone domain ;
In the savage mountain glen,
'Mong the tribes of swarthy men ;

Wheresoe'er a foot hath gone ;
Wheresoe'er the sun hath shone
On a league of peopled ground,
Little children may be found !

Blessings on them ! they in me
Move a kindly sympathy,
With their wishes, hopes, and fears ;
With their laughter and their tears ;
With their wonder so intense,
And their small experience !

Little children, not alone
On the wide earth are ye known,
'Mid its labours and its cares,
'Mid its sufferings and its snares.
Free from sorrow, free from strife,
In the world of love and life,
Where no sinful thing hath trod ;
In the presence of your God,
Spotless, blameless, glorified,
Little children, ye abide !

THE OLD FRIEND AND THE NEW.

My old friend, he was a good old friend,
And I thought, like a fool, his face to mend ;
I got another ; but ah ! to my cost
I found him unlike the one I had lost !
I and my friend, we were bred together :—
He had a smile like the summer weather ;
A kind warm heart ; and a hand as free :—
My friend, he was all the world to me !

I could sit with him and crack many a joke,
And talk of old times and the village folk ;
He had been with us at the Christmas time ;
He knew every tree we used to climb ;
And where we played ; and what befel,
My dear old friend remembered well.
It did me good but to see his face ;
And I've put another friend in his place !

I wonder how such a thing could be,
For my old friend would not have slighted me !

Oh my fine new friend, he is smooth and bland,
With a jewelled ring or two on his hand ;
He visits my lord and my lady fair ;
He hums the last new opera air.
He takes not the children on his knee ;
My faithful hound reproacheth me,
For he snarls when my new friend draweth near,
But my good old friend to the brute was dear !
I wonder how I such a thing could do,
As change the old friend for the new !

My rare old friend, he read the plays,
That were written in Master Shakspeare's days ;
He found in them wit and moral good :—
My new friend thinks them coarse and rude :—
And many a pleasant song he sung,
Because they were made when we were young :

He was not too grand, not he, to know
The merry old songs made long ago,
He writ his name on the window pane ;—
It was cracked by my new friend's riding cane !

My good old friend, "he tirmed at the pin,"
He opened the door and entered in ;
We all were glad to see his face
As he took at the fire his 'customed place,
And the little children, loud in glee,
They welcomed him as they welcome me.
He knew our griefs, our joys he shared ;
There cannot be friend with him compared ;
We had tried him long, had found him true !
Why changed I the old friend for the new !

My new friend cometh in lordly state ;
He peals a startling ring at the gate ;
There's hurry and pomp, there's pride and din,
And my new friend bravely entereth in.

I bring out the noblest wines for cheer,
I make him a feast that costeth dear ;
But he knows not what in my heart lies deep ;—
He may laugh with me, but never shall weep,
For there is no bond between us twain ;
And I sigh for my dear old friend again ;
And thus, too late, I bitterly rue
That I changed the old friend for the new !

CORN-FIELDS.

IN the young merry time of spring
When clover 'gins to burst ;
When blue-bells nod within the wood,
And sweet May whitens first ;
When merle and mavis sing their fill,
Green is the young corn on the hill.

But when the merry spring is past,
And summer groweth bold,
And in the garden and the field
A thousand flowers unfold;
Before a green leaf yet is sere,
The young corn shoots into the ear.

But then as day and night succeed,
And summer weareth on,
And in the flowery garden-beds
The red-rose groweth wan,
And holly-hock and sunflowers tall
O'ertop the mossy garden-wall.

When on the breath of autumn breeze,
From pastures dry and brown,
Goes floating, like an idle thought,
The fair, white thistle-down;
O, then what joy to walk at will,
Upon the golden harvest-hill!

What joy in dreamy ease to lie
Amid a field new-shorn,
And see all round on sun-lit slopes,
The piled up shocks of corn,
And send the fancy wandering o'er
All pleasant harvest fields of yore.

I feel the day ; I see the field ;
The quivering of the leaves ;
And good old Jacob and his house
Binding the yellow sheaves ;
And at this very hour I seem
To be with Joseph in his dream.

I see the fields of Bethlehem,
And reapers many a one,
Bending unto their sickles' stroke,
And Boaz looking on ;
And Ruth, the Moabitess fair,
Among the gleaners stooping there.

Again, I see a little child,
His mother's sole delight ;
God's living gift of love unto
The kind, good Shunamite ;
To mortal pangs I see him yield,
And the lad bear him from the field.

The sun-bathed quiet of the hills ;
The fields of Galilee,
That eighteen hundred years ago
Were full of corn, I see,
And the dear Saviour take his way
'Mid ripe ears on the Sabbath-day.

O golden fields of bending corn,
How beautiful they seem !—
The reaper-folk, the piled up sheaves,
To me are like a dream ;
The sunshine and the very air
Seem of old time, and take me there !

MABEL ON MIDSUMMER DAY.

A STORY OF THE OLDEN TIME.

PART I.

“ARISE, my maiden, Mabel,”
The mother said, “arise,
For the golden sun of Midsummer
Is shining in the skies.

“Arise my little maiden,
For thou must speed away,
To wait upon thy Grandmother
This livelong summer day.

“And thou must carry with thee
This wheaten cake so fine ;
This new-made pat of butter ;
This little flask of wine !

“ And tell the dear old body,
This day I cannot come,
For the good man went out yester-morn,
And he is not come home.

“ And more than this, poor Amy
Upon my knee doth lie ;
I fear me, with this fever-pain
The little child will die !

“ And thou can’st help thy grandmother ;
The table thou can’st spread ;
Can’st feed the little dog and bird,
And thou can’st make her bed.

“ And thou can’st fetch the water,
From the lady-well hard by ;
And thou can’st gather from the wood
The faggots brown and dry.

“ Can’st go down to the lonesome glen,
To milk the mother-ewe ;
This is the work, my Mabel,
That thou wilt have to do.

“ But listen now, my Mabel,
This is Midsummer-day,
When all the fairy people
From elf-land come away.

“ And when thou art in lonesome glen,
Keep by the running burn,
And do not pluck the strawberry flower,
Nor break the lady-fern.

“ But think not of the fairy folk,
Lest mischief should befall ;
Think only of poor Amy,
And how thou lov’st us all.

“ Yet keep good heart, my Mabel,

 If thou the fairies see,

And give them kindly answer

 If they should speak to thee.

“ And when into the fir-wood

 Thou go'st for faggots brown,

Do not, like idle children,

 Go wandering up and down.

“ But, fill thy little apron,

 My child, with earnest speed ;

And that thou break no living bough

 Within the wood, take heed.

“ For they are spiteful brownies

 Who in the wood abide,

So be thou careful of this thing,

 Lest evil should betide.

“ But think not, little Mabel,
 Whilst thou art in the wood,
Of dwarfish wilful brownies,
 But of the Father good.

“ And when thou goest to the spring
 To fetch the water thence,
Do not disturb the little stream,
 Lest this should give offence.

“ For the Queen of all the fairies
 She loves that water bright ;
I’ve seen her drinking there myself
 On many a summer night.

“ But she’s a gracious lady,
 And her thou need’st not fear ;
Only disturb thou not the stream,
 Nor spill the water clear ! ”

“Now all this I will heed, mother,
Will no word disobey,
And wait upon the grandmother
This livelong summer day!”

PART II.

AWAY tripped little Mabel,
With the wheaten cake so fine;
With the new-made pat of butter,
And the little flask of wine.

And long before the sun was hot,
And morning mists had cleared,
Beside the good old grandmother
The willing child appeared.

And all her mother's message
She told with right good will,
How that the father was away,
And the little child was ill.

And then she swept the hearth up clean,
And then the table spread ;
And next she fed the dog and bird ;
And then she made the bed,

“ And go now,” said the grandmother,
“ Ten paces down the dell,
And bring in water for the day ;
Thou know’st the lady-well !”

The first time that good Mabel went,
Nothing at all saw she,
Except a bird—a sky-blue bird—
That sat upon a tree.

The next time that good Mabel went,
There sat a lady bright
Beside the well,—a lady small,
All clothed in green and white.

A curtsey low made Mabel,
And then she stooped to fill
Her pitcher at the sparkling spring,
But no drop did she spill.

“Thou art a handy maiden,”
The fairy lady said ;
“Thou hast not spilled a drop, nor yet
The fair spring troubléd !

“And for this thing which thou hast done,
Yet may'st not understand,
I give to thee a better gift
Than houses or than land.

“Thou shalt do well, whate'er thou dost,
As thou hast done this day ;
Shalt have the will and power to please,
And shalt be loved alway !”

Thus having said, she passed from sight,
And nought could Mabel see,
But the little bird, the sky-blue bird,
Upon the leafy tree.

—“And now go,” said the grandmother,
“And fetch in faggots dry ;
All in the neighbouring fir-wood,
Beneath the trees they lie.”

Away went kind, good Mabel,
Into the fir-wood near,
Where all the ground was dry and brown,
And the grass grew thin and sere.

She did not wander up and down,
Nor yet a live branch pull,
But steadily, of the fallen boughs
She picked her apron full.

And when the wild wood brownies,
Came sliding to her mind,
She drove them thence as she was told,
With home-thoughts sweet and kind.

But all that while the brownies
Within the fir wood still,
They watched her how she picked the wood,
And strove to do no ill.

“And oh, but she is small and neat,”
Said one, “’twere shame to spite
A creature so demure and meek,
A creature harmless quite!”

“Look only,” said another,
“At her little gown of blue;
At the kerchief pinned about her head
And at her little shoe!”

“Oh, but she is a comely child,”
Said a third, “and we will lay
A good-luck penny in her path,
A boon for her this day,—
Seeing she broke no living wood;
No live thing did affray!”

With that the smallest penny,
Of the finest silver ore,
Upon the dry and slippery path,
Lay Mabel's feet before.

With joy she picked the penny up,
The fairy penny good;
And with her faggots dry and brown
Went wondering from the wood.

“Now she has that,” said the brownies,
“Let flax be ever so dear,
Will buy her clothes of the very best,
For many and many a year!”

—“And go, now,” said the grandmother,
“Since falling is the dew,
Go down unto the lonesome glen,
And milk the mother-ewe!”

All down into the lonesome glen,
Through copses thick and wild;
Through moist rank grass, by trickling streams
Went on the willing child.

And when she came to lonesome glen,
She kept beside the burn,
And neither plucked the strawberry flower,
Nor broke the lady-fern.

And while she milked the mother-ewe
Within the lonesome glen,
She wished that little Amy
Were strong and well again.

And soon as she had thought this thought,
She heard a coming sound,
As if a thousand fairy-folk
Were gathering all around.

And then she heard a little voice,
Shrill as the midge's wing,
That spake aloud, "a human child
Is here—yet mark this thing !

"The lady-fern is all unbroke,
The strawberry flower unta'en !
What shall be done for her, who still
From mischief can refrain ?"

"Give her a fairy cake !" said one,
"Grant her a wish !" said three ;
"The latest wish that she had wished,"
Said all, "whate'er it be !"

—Kind Mabel heard the words they spake,
And from the lonesome glen,
Unto the good old grandmother
Went gladly back again.

Thus happened it to Mabel
On that Midsummer day,
And these three fairy blessings
She took with her away.

—'Tis good to make all duty sweet,
To be alert and kind ;
'Tis good, like little Mabel,
To have a willing mind !

ELLEN MORE.

“SWEET Ellen More,” said I, “come forth
Beneath the sunny sky ;
Why stand you musing all alone,
With such an anxious eye ?
What is it child, that aileth you ?”
And thus she made reply :—

“The fields are green, the skies are bright,
The leaves are on the tree,
And ’mong the sweet flowers of the thyme
Far flies the honey-bee ;
And the lark hath sung since morning prime,
And merrily singeth he.

“ Yet not for this shall I go forth
On the open hills to play ;
There’s not a bird that singeth now
Would tempt me hence to stray ;—
I would not leave our cottage-door
For a thousand flowers to-day !”

“ And why ?” said I ; “ what is there here
Beside your cottage-door,
To make a merry girl like you
Thus idly stand to pore ?
There is a mystery in this thing,—
Now tell me, Ellen More !”

The fair girl looked into my face,
With her dark and serious eye ;
Silently awhile she looked,
Then heaved a quiet sigh ;
And, with a half-reluctant will,
Again she made reply :—

“Three years ago, unknown to us,
When nuts were on the tree,
Even in the pleasant harvest-time,
My brother went to sea—
Unknown to us to sea he went,
And a woful house were we.

“That winter was a weary time,
A long, dark time of woe ;
For we knew not in what ship he sailed,
And vainly sought to know ;
And day and night the loud, wild winds
Seemed evermore to blow.

“My mother lay upon her bed,
Her spirit sorely tossed
With dismal thoughts of storm and wreck
Upon some savage coast ;
But morn and eve we prayed to Heaven
That he might not be lost.

“ And when the pleasant spring came on,
And fields again were green,
He sent a letter full of news,
Of the wonders he had seen ;
Praying us to think him dutiful
As he afore had been.

“ The tidings that came next were from
A sailor old and grey,
Who saw his ship at anchor lie
In the harbour at Bombay ;
But he said my brother pined for home,
And wished he were away.

“ Again he wrote a letter long,
Without a word of gloom ;
And soon, and very soon, he said,
He should again come home ;
I watched, as now, beside the door,
And yet he did not come.

“ I watched and watched, but I knew not then
It would be all in vain :
For very sick he lay the while
In a hospital in Spain.
Ah, me ! I fear my brother dear
Will ne’er come home again ?

“ And now I watch—for we have heard
That he is on his way,
And the letter said, in very truth,
He would be here to-day.
Oh ! there’s no bird that singeth now
Could tempt me hence away !”

That self-same eve I wandered down
Unto the busy strand,
Just as a little boat came in
With people to the land ;
And ’mongst them was a sailor-boy
Who leaped upon the sand.

I knew him by his dark-blue eyes,
And by his features fair ;
And as he leaped ashore, he sang
A simple Scottish air,—
“There’s nae place like our ain dear hame
To be met wi’ onywhere !”

A SWINGING SONG.

MERRY it is on a summer’s day,
All through the meadows to wend away ;
To watch the brooks glide fast or slow,
And the little fish twinkle down below ;
To hear the lark in the blue sky sing,
Oh, sure enough, ’tis a merry thing—
But ’tis merrier far to swing—to swing !

Merry it is on a winter’s night,
To listen to tales of elf and sprite,

Of caves and castle so dim and old,—
The dimmallest tales that ever were told;
And then to laugh, and then to sing,
You may take my word is a merry thing,—
But 'tis merrier far to swing—to swing!

Down with the hoop upon the green;
Down with the ringing tambourine;—
Little heed we for this or for that;
Off with the bonnet, off with the hat!
Away we go like birds on the wing!
Higher yet! higher yet! “Now for the King!”
This is the way we swing—we swing!

Scarcely the bough bends, Claude is so light.—
Mount up behind him—there, that is right!
Down bends the branch now!—swing him away
Higher yet—higher yet—higher I say!
Oh, what a joy it is! Now let us sing
“A pear for the Queen—an apple for the King!”
And shake the old tree as we swing—we swing!

SPRING.

APRIL.

SPRING! the beautiful Spring is coming,
The sun shines bright and the bees are humming;
And the fields are rich with the early flowers,
 Beds of crocus and daisies white,
And under the budding hedge-row, showers
 Of the ficary golden bright!
Come, come, let you and me,
Go out and the promise of Spring-time see,
For many a pleasant nook I know,
Where the hooded arum and blue-bell grow,
And crowds of violets white as snow;—

 Come, come, let's go!

 Let's go, for hark!

 I hear the lark;

And the blackbird and thrush on the hill-side tree,
Shout to each other so merrily;

 And the wren sings loud,

 And a little crowd

Of gnats in the sun dance cheerily.

Come, come! come along with me,
For the tassels are red on the tall larch tree,
And in homesteads hilly,
The spathed daffodilly
Is growing in beauty for me and thee!

MAY.

'Tis Spring! 'tis Spring! all creatures know it,
The skies, the earth, the waters shew it,
The freckled snakes come out i' the sun,
The leverets race in the meadows green;
The sleep of the little dormouse is done,
And the frisking squirrel again is seen!
Come, come who will,
Let us take our fill
Of delight in the valley, the field, the hill;
Let us go to the wood that so late was still;
The air is ringing
With singing, singing!
The flowers are springing
The lanes along,

The white and the red,
And the umbelled head,
And the single-blowing,
All thickly growing,
This merry May morn, a thousand strong!
The fishes are glad this May morning,
And like things of light
Through the waters bright,
Flash to and fro!
There's a sound of joy in the youthful Spring—
Hark! hark!
There sings the lark!
Why tarry we yet? let's go!
The strong lamb boundeth,
The glad foal neighs:
And joy resoundeth
A thousand ways—
Over hill and valley and wood and plain!
Joy poureth down like a shower of rain!
I'll tarry no more! come, come, let's go!

