

# GARDEN DAYS

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I

## Night and Day

When the golden day is done,  
Through the closing portal,  
Child and garden, Flower and sun,  
Vanish all things mortal.

As the blinding shadows fall  
As the rays diminish,  
Under evening's cloak they all  
Roll away and vanish.

Garden darkened, daisy shut,  
Child in bed, they slumber—  
Glow-worm in the hallway rut,  
Mice among the lumber.

In the darkness houses shine,  
Parents move the candles;  
Till on all the night divine  
Turns the bedroom handles.

Till at last the day begins  
In the east a-breaking,  
In the hedges and the whins  
Sleeping birds a-waking.

In the darkness shapes of things,  
Houses, trees and hedges,  
Clearer grow; and sparrow's wings  
Beat on window ledges.

These shall wake the yawning maid;  
She the door shall open—  
Finding dew on garden glade

And the morning broken.

There my garden grows again

Green and rosy painted,

As at eve behind the pane

From my eyes it fainted.

Just as it was shut away,

Toy-like, in the even,

Here I see it glow with day

Under glowing heaven.

Every path and every plot,

Every blush of roses,

Every blue forget-me-not

Where the dew reposes,

“Up!” they cry, “the day is come  
On the smiling valleys:  
We have beat the morning drum;  
Playmate, join your allies!”

## **II**

### **Nest Eggs**

Birds all the summer day  
Flutter and quarrel  
Here in the arbour-like  
Tent of the laurel.

Here in the fork  
The brown nest is seated;  
For little blue eggs

The mother keeps heated.

While we stand watching her

Staring like gabies,

Safe in each egg are the

Bird's little babies.

Soon the frail eggs they shall

Chip, and upspringing

Make all the April woods

Merry with singing.

Younger than we are,

O children, and frailer,

Soon in the blue air they'll be,

Singer and sailor.

We, so much older,  
Taller and stronger,  
We shall look down on the  
Birdies no longer.

They shall go flying  
With musical speeches  
High overhead in the  
Tops of the beeches.

In spite of our wisdom  
And sensible talking,  
We on our feet must go  
Plodding and walking.

### III

## The Flowers

All the names I know from nurse:  
Gardener's garters, Shepherd's purse,  
Bachelor's buttons, Lady's smock,  
And the Lady Hollyhock.

Fairy places, fairy things,  
Fairy woods where the wild bee wings,  
Tiny trees for tiny dames—  
These must all be fairy names!

Tiny woods below whose boughs  
Shady fairies weave a house;  
Tiny tree-tops, rose or thyme,  
Where the braver fairies climb!



Fair are grown-up people's trees,  
But the fairest woods are these;  
Where, if I were not so tall,  
I should live for good and all.

## **IV**

### **Summer Sun**

Great is the sun, and wide he goes  
Through empty heaven with repose;  
And in the blue and glowing days  
More thick than rain he showers his rays.

Though closer still the blinds we pull  
To keep the shady parlour cool,

Yet he will find a chink or two  
To slip his golden fingers through.

The dusty attic spider-clad  
He, through the keyhole, maketh glad;  
And through the broken edge of tiles  
Into the laddered hay-loft smiles.

Meantime his golden face around  
He bares to all the garden ground,  
And sheds a warm and glittering look  
Among the ivy's inmost nook.

Above the hills, along the blue,  
Round the bright air with footing true,  
To please the child, to paint the rose,  
The gardener of the World, he goes.

## V

### **The Dumb Soldier**

When the grass was closely mown,  
Walking on the lawn alone,  
In the turf a hole I found,  
And hid a soldier underground.

Spring and daisies came apace;  
Grasses hid my hiding place;  
Grasses run like a green sea  
O'er the lawn up to my knee.

Under grass alone he lies,  
Looking up with leaden eyes,  
Scarlet coat and pointed gun,  
To the stars and to the sun.

When the grass is ripe like grain,  
When the scythe is stoned again,  
When the lawn is shaven clear,  
The my hole shall reappear.

I shall find him, never fear,  
I shall find my grenadier;  
But for all that's gone and come,  
I shall find my soldier dumb.

He has lived, a little thing,  
In the grassy woods of spring;  
Done, if he could tell me true,  
Just as I should like to do.

He has seen the starry hours  
And the springing of the flowers;  
And the fairy things that pass

In the forests of the grass.

In the silence he has heard  
Talking bee and ladybird,  
And the butterfly has flown  
O'er him as he lay alone.

Not a word will he disclose,  
Not a word of all he knows.  
I must lay him on the shelf,  
And make up the tale myself.

## VI

### Autumn Fires

In the other gardens  
And all up the vale,  
From the autumn bonfires  
See the smoke trail!

Pleasant summer over  
And all the summer flowers,  
The red fire blazes,  
The grey smoke towers.

Sing a song of seasons!  
Something bright in all!  
Flowers in the summer,  
Fires in the fall!

## VII

### The Gardener

The gardener does not love to talk.  
He makes me keep the gravel walk;  
And when he puts his tools away,  
He locks the door and takes the key.

Away behind the currant row,  
Where no one else but cook may go,  
Far in the plots, I see him dig,  
Old and serious, brown and big.

He digs the flowers, green, red, and blue,  
Nor wishes to be spoken to.  
He digs the flowers and cuts the hay,  
And never seems to want to play.

Silly gardener! summer goes,  
And winter comes with pinching toes,  
When in the garden bare and brown  
You must lay your barrow down.

Well now, and while the summer stays,  
To profit by these garden days  
O how much wiser you would be  
To play at Indian wars with me!

## VIII

### Historical Associations

Dear Uncle Jim. this garden ground  
That now you smoke your pipe around,



has seen immortal actions done  
And valiant battles lost and won.

Here we had best on tip-toe tread,  
While I for safety march ahead,  
For this is that enchanted ground  
Where all who loiter slumber sound.

Here is the sea, here is the sand,  
Here is the simple Shepherd's Land,  
Here are the fairy hollyhocks,  
And there are Ali Baba's rocks.  
But yonder, see! apart and high,  
Frozen Siberia lies; where I,  
With Robert Bruce William Tell,  
Was bound by an enchanter's spell.

**ENVOYS**

I

**To Willie and Henrietta**

If two may read aright  
These rhymes of old delight  
And house and garden play,  
You too, my cousins, and you only, may.

You in a garden green  
With me were king and queen,  
Were hunter, soldier, tar,  
And all the thousand things that children are.

Now in the elders' seat  
We rest with quiet feet,  
And from the window-bay  
We watch the children, our successors, play.

“Time was,” the golden head  
Irrevocably said;  
But time which one can bind,  
While flowing fast away, leaves love behind.

## **II**

### **To My Mother**

You too, my mother, read my rhymes  
For love of unforgotten times,  
And you may chance to hear once more  
The little feet along the floor.

### III

#### To Auntie

“Chief of our aunts”—not only I,  
But all your dozen of nurselings cry—  
“What did the other children do?  
And what were childhood, wanting you?”

### IV

#### To Minnie

The red room with the giant bed  
Where none but elders laid their head;  
The little room where you and I  
Did for awhile together lie

And, simple, suitor, I your hand  
In decent marriage did demand;  
The great day nursery, best of all,  
With pictures pasted on the wall  
And leaves upon the blind—  
A pleasant room wherein to wake  
And hear the leafy garden shake  
And rustle in the wind—  
And pleasant there to lie in bed  
And see the pictures overhead—  
The wars about Sebastopol,  
The grinning guns along the wall,  
The daring escalade,  
The plunging ships, the bleating sheep,  
The happy children ankle-deep  
And laughing as they wade:  
All these are vanished clean away,  
And the old manse is changed to-day;

It wears an altered face  
And shields a stranger race.  
The river, on from mill to mill,  
Flows past our childhood's garden still;  
But ah! we children never more  
Shall watch it from the water-door!  
Below the yew—it still is there—  
Our phantom voices haunt the air  
As we were still at play,  
And I can hear them call and say:  
“How far is it to Babylon?”

Ah, far enough, my dear,  
Far, far enough from here—  
Smiling and kind, you grace a shelf  
Too high for me to reach myself.  
Reach down a hand, my dear, and take  
These rhymes for old acquaintance' sake!

Yet you have farther gone!

“Can I get there by candlelight?”

So goes the old refrain.

I do not know—perchance you might—

But only, children, hear it right,

Ah, never to return again!

The eternal dawn, beyond a doubt,

Shall break on hill and plain,

And put all stars and candles out

Ere we be young again.

To you in distant India, these

I send across the seas,

Nor count it far across.

For which of us forget

The Indian cabinets,

The bones of antelope, the wings of albatross,

The pied and painted birds and beans,



The junks and bangles, beads and screens,  
The gods and sacred bells,  
And the load-humming, twisted shells!  
The level of the parlour floor  
Was honest, homely, Scottish shore;  
But when we climbed upon a chair,  
Behold the gorgeous East was there!  
Be this a fable; and behold  
Me in the parlour as of old,  
And Minnie just above me set  
In the quaint Indian cabinet!

## V

### To My Name-child

#### 1

Some day soon this rhyming volume, if you learn with proper speed,  
Little Louis Sanchez, will be given you to read.  
Then you shall discover, that your name was printed down  
By the English printers, long before, in London town.

In the great and busy city where the East and West are met,  
All the little letters did the English printer set;  
While you thought of nothing, and were still too young to play,  
Foreign people thought of you in places far away.

Ay, and when you slept, a baby, over all the English lands  
Other little children took the volume in their hands;

Other children questioned, in their homes across the seas:

Who was little Louis, won't you tell us, mother, please?

2

Now that you have spelt your lesson, lay it down and go and play,

Seeking shells and seaweed on the sands of Monterey,

Watching all the mighty whalebones, lying buried by the breeze,

Tiny sandpipers, and the huge Pacific seas.

And remember in your playing, as the sea-fog rolls to you,

Long ere you could read it, how I told you what to do;

And that while you thought of no one, nearly half the world away

Some one thought of Louis on the beach of Monterey!

## VI

### To Any Reader

As from the house your mother sees  
You playing round the garden trees,  
    So you may see, if you will look  
Through the windows of this book,  
    Another child, far, far away,  
    And in another garden, play.  
But do not think you can at all,  
By knocking on the window, call  
That child to hear you. He intent  
    Is all on his play-business bent.  
He does not hear, he will not look,  
Nor yet be lured out of this book.  
    For, long ago, the truth to say,  
He has grown up and gone away,

And it is but a child of air  
That lingers in the garden there.