

Classic Poetry Series

Louisa May Alcott
- poems -

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Louisa May Alcott(29 November 1832 – 6 March 1888)

Louisa May Alcott was an American novelist. She is best known for the novel *Little Women*, written and set in the Alcott family home, Orchard House in Concord, Massachusetts and published in 1868. This novel is loosely based on her childhood experiences with her three sisters.

In 1840, after several setbacks with the school, the Alcott family moved to a cottage 2 acres (8,100 m²) along the Sudbury River in Concord, Massachusetts. The Alcott family moved to the Utopian Fruitlands community for a brief interval in 1843-1844 and then, after its collapse, to rented rooms and finally to a house in Concord purchased with her mother's inheritance and financial help from Emerson. Alcott's early education included lessons from the naturalist Henry David Thoreau. She received the majority of her schooling from her father. She also received some instruction from writers and educators such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Margaret Fuller, who were all family friends. She later described these early years in a newspaper sketch entitled "Transcendental Wild Oats." The sketch was reprinted in the volume *Silver Pitchers* (1876), which relates the family's experiment in "plain living and high thinking" at Fruitlands.

As an adult, Alcott was an abolitionist and a feminist. In 1847, the family housed a fugitive slave for one week. In 1848 Alcott read and admired the "Declaration of Sentiments" published by the Seneca Falls Convention on women's rights.

Poverty made it necessary for Alcott to go to work at an early age as an occasional teacher, seamstress, governess, domestic helper, and writer. Her first book was *Flower Fables* (1855), a book of tales originally written for Ellen Emerson, daughter of Ralph Waldo Emerson. In 1860, Alcott began writing for the *Atlantic Monthly*. She was a nurse in the Union Hospital at Georgetown, D.C., for six weeks in 1862-1863. Her letters home, revised and published in the *Commonwealth* and collected as *Hospital Sketches* (1863, republished with additions in 1869), garnered her first critical recognition for her observations and humor. Her novel *Moods* (1864), based on her own experience, was also promising.

She also wrote passionate, fiery novels and sensation stories under the nom de plume A. M. Barnard. Among these are *A Long Fatal Love Chase* and *Pauline's Passion and Punishment*. Her protagonists for these tales are willful and

relentless in their pursuit of their own aims, which often include revenge on those who have humiliated or thwarted them. These works achieved immediate commercial success in their day.

Alcott also produced moralistic and wholesome stories for children, and, with the exceptions of the semi-autobiographical tale *Work* (1873), and the anonymous novelette *A Modern Mephistopheles* (1875), which attracted suspicion that it was written by Julian Hawthorne, she did not return to creating works for adults.

Alcott wrote until her death, which was attributed to the after-effects of mercury poisoning contracted during her American Civil War service. She had received calomel treatments for the effects of typhoid. She died in Boston on March 6, 1888 at age 55, two days after visiting her father on his deathbed. Her last words were "Is it not meningitis?"

A Lament For S. B. Pat Paw

We mourn the loss of our little pet,
And sigh o'er her hapless fate,
For never more by the fire she'll sit,
Nor play by the old green gate.

The little grave where her infant sleeps
Is 'neath the chestnut tree.
But o'er her grave we may not weep,
We know not where it may be.

Her empty bed, her idle ball,
Will never see her more;
No gentle tap, no loving purr
Is heard at the parlor door.

Another cat comes after her mice,
A cat with a dirty face,
But she does not hunt as our darling did,
Nor play with her airy grace.

Her stealthy paws tread the very hall
Where Snowball used to play,
But she only spits at the dogs our pet
So gallantly drove away.

She is useful and mild, and does her best,
But she is not fair to see,
And we cannot give her your place dear,
Nor worship her as we worship thee.

Louisa May Alcott

A Little Bird I Am

'A little bird I am,
Shut from the fields of air,
And in my cage I sit and sing
To Him who placed me there:
Well pleased a prisoner to be,
Because, my God, it pleases Thee!

'Naught have I else to do;
I sing the whole day long;
And He whom most I love to please
Doth listen to my song,
He caught and bound my wandering wing,
But still He bends to hear me sing.'

Louisa May Alcott

A Song From The Suds

Queen of my tub, I merrily sing,
While the white foam raises high,
And sturdily wash, and rinse, and wring,
And fasten the clothes to dry;
Then out in the free fresh air they swing,
Under the sunny sky.

I wish we could wash from our hearts and our souls
The stains of the week away,
And let water and air by their magic make
Ourselves as pure as they;
Then on the earth there would be indeed
A glorious washing day!

Along the path of a useful life
Will heart's-ease ever bloom;
The busy mind has no time to think
Of sorrow, or care, or gloom;
And anxious thoughts may be swept away
As we busily wield a broom.

I am glad a task to me is given
To labor at day by day;
For it brings me health, and strength, and hope,
And I cheerfully learn to say-
'Head, you may think; heart, you may feel;
But hand, you shall work always!'

Louisa May Alcott

And If Your Nancy Frowns, My Lad

"And if your Nancy frowns, my lad,
And scorns a jacket blue,
Just hoist your sails for other ports,
And find a maid more true."

Louisa May Alcott

Beds To The Front Of Them

'Beds to the front of them,
Beds to the right of them,
Beds to the left of them,
Nobody blundered.
Beamed at by hungry souls,
Screamed at with brimming bowls,
Steamed at by army rolls,
Buttered and sundered.
With coffee not cannon plied,
Each must be satisfied,
Whether they lived or died;
All the men wondered.'

Louisa May Alcott

Bide A Wee

'The puir auld folk at home, ye mind,
Are frail and failing sair;
And weel I ken they'd miss me, lad,
Gin I come hame nae mair.
The grist is out, the times are hard,
The kine are only three;
I canna leave the auld folk now.
We'd better bide a wee.

'I fear me sair they're failing baith;
For when I sit apart,
They talk o' Heaven so earnestly,
It well nigh breaks my heart.
So, laddie, dinna urge me now,
It surely winna be;
I canna leave the auld folk yet.
We'd better bide a wee.'

Louisa May Alcott

Brighter Shone The Golden Shadows

Brighter shone the golden shadows;
On the cool wind softly came
The low, sweet tones of happy flowers,
Singing little Violet's name.
'Mong the green trees was it whispered,
And the bright waves bore it on
To the lonely forest flowers,
Where the glad news had not gone.

Thus the Frost-King lost his kingdom,
And his power to harm and blight.
Violet conquered, and his cold heart
Warmed with music, love, and light;
And his fair home, once so dreary,
Gay with lovely Elves and flowers,
Brought a joy that never faded
Through the long bright summer hours.

Thus, by Violet's magic power,
All dark shadows passed away,
And o'er the home of happy flowers
The golden light for ever lay.
Thus the Fairy mission ended,
And all Flower-Land was taught
The 'Power of Love,' by gentle deeds
That little Violet wrought.

Louisa May Alcott

Chevalita

'Chevalita,
Pretty creature,
I do love her
Like a brother;
Just to ride
Is my delight,
For she does not
Kick or bite,'

Louisa May Alcott

Chingery Wangery Chan

'In China there lived a little man,
His name was Chingery Wangery Chan.'

'His legs were short, his feet were small,
And this little man could not walk at all.'

'Chingery changery ri co day,
Ekel tekkel happy man;
Uron odesko canty oh, oh,
Gallopy wallopy China go.'

'Miss Ki Hi was short and squat,
She had money and he had not
So off to her he resolved to go,
And play her a tune on his little banjo.'

'Whang fun li,
Tang hua ki,
Hong Kong do ra me!
Ah sin lo,
Pan to fo,
Tsing up chin leute!'

'Miss Ki Hi heard his notes of love,
And held her wash-bowl up above
It fell upon the little man,
And this was the end of Chingery Chan.'

Louisa May Alcott

Clover-Blossom

In a quiet, pleasant meadow,
Beneath a summer sky,
Where green old trees their branches waved,
And winds went singing by;
Where a little brook went rippling
So musically low,
And passing clouds cast shadows
On the waving grass below;
Where low, sweet notes of brooding birds
Stole out on the fragrant air,
And golden sunlight shone undimmed
On all most fresh and fair;--
There bloomed a lovely sisterhood
Of happy little flowers,
Together in this pleasant home,
Through quiet summer hours.
No rude hand came to gather them,
No chilling winds to blight;
Warm sunbeams smiled on them by day,
And soft dews fell at night.
So here, along the brook-side,
Beneath the green old trees,
The flowers dwelt among their friends,
The sunbeams and the breeze.

One morning, as the flowers awoke,
Fragrant, and fresh, and fair,
A little worm came creeping by,
And begged a shelter there.
'Ah! pity and love me,' sighed the worm,
'I am lonely, poor, and weak;
A little spot for a resting-place,
Dear flowers, is all I seek.
I am not fair, and have dwelt unloved
By butterfly, bird, and bee.
They little knew that in this dark form
Lay the beauty they yet may see.
Then let me lie in the deep green moss,
And weave my little tomb,

And sleep my long, unbroken sleep
Till Spring's first flowers come.
Then will I come in a fairer dress,
And your gentle care repay
By the grateful love of the humble worm;
Kind flowers, O let me stay!
But the wild rose showed her little thorns,
While her soft face glowed with pride;
The violet hid beneath the drooping ferns,
And the daisy turned aside.
Little Houstonia scornfully laughed,
As she danced on her slender stem;
While the cowslip bent to the rippling waves,
And whispered the tale to them.
A blue-eyed grass looked down on the worm,
As it silently turned away,
And cried, 'Thou wilt harm our delicate leaves,
And therefore thou canst not stay.'
Then a sweet, soft voice, called out from far,
'Come hither, poor worm, to me;
The sun lies warm in this quiet spot,
And I'll share my home with thee.'
The wondering flowers looked up to see
Who had offered the worm a home:
'T was a clover-blossom, whose fluttering leaves
Seemed beckoning him to come;
It dwelt in a sunny little nook,
Where cool winds rustled by,
And murmuring bees and butterflies came,
On the flower's breast to lie.
Down through the leaves the sunlight stole,
And seemed to linger there,
As if it loved to brighten the home
Of one so sweet and fair.
Its rosy face smiled kindly down,
As the friendless worm drew near;
And its low voice, softly whispering, said
'Poor thing, thou art welcome here;
Close at my side, in the soft green moss,
Thou wilt find a quiet bed,
Where thou canst softly sleep till Spring,
With my leaves above thee spread.

I pity and love thee, friendless worm,
Though thou art not graceful or fair;
For many a dark, unlovely form,
Hath a kind heart dwelling there;
No more o'er the green and pleasant earth,
Lonely and poor, shalt thou roam,
For a loving friend hast thou found in me,
And rest in my little home.'
Then, deep in its quiet mossy bed,
Sheltered from sun and shower,
The grateful worm spun its winter tomb,
In the shadow of the flower.
And Clover guarded well its rest,
Till Autumn's leaves were sere,
Till all her sister flowers were gone,
And her winter sleep drew near.
Then her withered leaves were softly spread
O'er the sleeping worm below,
Ere the faithful little flower lay
Beneath the winter snow.

Spring came again, and the flowers rose
From their quiet winter graves,
And gayly danced on their slender stems,
And sang with the rippling waves.
Softly the warm winds kissed their cheeks;
Brightly the sunbeams fell,
As, one by one, they came again
In their summer homes to dwell.
And little Clover bloomed once more,
Rosy, and sweet, and fair,
And patiently watched by the mossy bed,
For the worm still slumbered there.
Then her sister flowers scornfully cried,
As they waved in the summer air,
'The ugly worm was friendless and poor;
Little Clover, why shouldst thou care?
Then watch no more, nor dwell alone,
Away from thy sister flowers;
Come, dance and feast, and spend with us
These pleasant summer hours.
We pity thee, foolish little flower,

To trust what the false worm said;
He will not come in a fairer dress,
For he lies in the green moss dead.'
But little Clover still watched on,
Alone in her sunny home;
She did not doubt the poor worm's truth,
And trusted he would come.

At last the small cell opened wide,
And a glittering butterfly,
From out the moss, on golden wings,
Soared up to the sunny sky.
Then the wondering flowers cried aloud,
'Clover, thy watch was vain;
He only sought a shelter here,
And never will come again.'
And the unkind flowers danced for joy,
When they saw him thus depart;
For the love of a beautiful butterfly
Is dear to a flower's heart.
They feared he would stay in Clover's home,
And her tender care repay;
So they danced for joy, when at last he rose
And silently flew away.
Then little Clover bowed her head,
While her soft tears fell like dew;
For her gentle heart was grieved, to find
That her sisters' words were true,
And the insect she had watched so long
When helpless, poor, and lone,
Thankless for all her faithful care,
On his golden wings had flown.
But as she drooped, in silent grief,
She heard little Daisy cry,
'O sisters, look! I see him now,
Afar in the sunny sky;
He is floating back from Cloud-Land now,
Borne by the fragrant air.
Spread wide your leaves, that he may choose
The flower he deems most fair.'
Then the wild rose glowed with a deeper blush,
As she proudly waved on her stem;

The Cowslip bent to the clear blue waves,
And made her mirror of them.
Little Houstonia merrily danced,
And spread her white leaves wide;
While Daisy whispered her joy and hope,
As she stood by her gay friends' side.
Violet peeped from the tall green ferns,
And lifted her soft blue eye
To watch the glittering form, that shone
Afar in the summer sky.
They thought no more of the ugly worm,
Who once had wakened their scorn;
But looked and longed for the butterfly now,
As the soft wind bore him on.

Nearer and nearer the bright form came,
And fairer the blossoms grew;
Each welcomed him, in her sweetest tones;
Each offered her honey and dew.
But in vain did they beckon, and smile, and call,
And wider their leaves unclose;
The glittering form still floated on,
By Violet, Daisy, and Rose.
Lightly it flew to the pleasant home
Of the flower most truly fair,
On Clover's breast he softly lit,
And folded his bright wings there.
'Dear flower,' the butterfly whispered low,
'Long hast thou waited for me;
Now I am come, and my grateful love
Shall brighten thy home for thee;
Thou hast loved and cared for me, when alone,
Hast watched o'er me long and well;
And now will I strive to show the thanks
The poor worm could not tell.
Sunbeam and breeze shall come to thee,
And the coolest dews that fall;
Whate'er a flower can wish is thine,
For thou art worthy all.
And the home thou shared with the friendless worm
The butterfly's home shall be;
And thou shalt find, dear, faithful flower,

A loving friend in me.'
Then, through the long, bright summer hours
Through sunshine and through shower,
Together in their happy home
Dwelt butterfly and flower.

Louisa May Alcott

Dear Grif

'Dear Grif,
Here is a whiff
Of beautiful spring flowers;
The big red rose
Is for your nose,
As toward the sky it towers.

'Oh, do not frown
Upon this crown
Of green pinks and blue geranium
But think of me
When this you see,
And put it on your cranium.'

Louisa May Alcott

Don'T Drive Me Away

'Don't drive me away,
But hear what I say:
Bad men want the gold;
They will steal it to-night,
And you must take flight;
So be quiet and busy and bold.'

'Slip away with me,
And you will see
What a wise little thing am I;
For the road I show
No man can know,
Since it's up in the pathless sky.'

Louisa May Alcott

Fairy Song

The moonlight fades from flower and rose
And the stars dim one by one;
The tale is told, the song is sung,
And the Fairy feast is done.
The night-wind rocks the sleeping flowers,
And sings to them, soft and low.
The early birds ere long will wake:
'T is time for the Elves to go.

O'er the sleeping earth we silently pass,
Unseen by mortal eye,
And send sweet dreams, as we lightly float
Through the quiet moonlit sky;--
For the stars' soft eyes alone may see,
And the flowers alone may know,
The feasts we hold, the tales we tell;
So't is time for the Elves to go.

From bird, and blossom, and bee,
We learn the lessons they teach;
And seek, by kindly deeds, to win
A loving friend in each.
And though unseen on earth we dwell,
Sweet voices whisper low,
And gentle hearts most joyously greet
The Elves where'er they go.

When next we meet in the Fairy dell,
May the silver moon's soft light
Shine then on faces gay as now,
And Elfin hearts as light.
Now spread each wing, for the eastern sky
With sunlight soon shall glow.
The morning star shall light us home:
Farewell! for the Elves must go.

Louisa May Alcott

Flowers, Dear Flowers, Farewell!

'We are sending you, dear flowers,
Forth alone to die,
Where your gentle sisters may not weep
O'er the cold graves where you lie;
But you go to bring them fadeless life
In the bright homes where they dwell,
And you softly smile that 't is so,
As we sadly sing farewell.

O plead with gentle words for us,
And whisper tenderly
Of generous love to that cold heart,
And it will answer ye;
And though you fade in a dreary home,
Yet loving hearts will tell
Of the joy and peace that you have given:
Flowers, dear flowers, farewell!

Louisa May Alcott

For Myself Alone, I Would Not Be

'For myself alone, I would not be
Ambitious in my wish; but, for you,
I would be trebled twenty times myself;
A thousand times more fair,
Ten thousand times more rich.'

Louisa May Alcott

Fragments

I am the monarch of the Sea,
The ruler of the Queen's Navee,--
When at anchor here I ride,
My bosom swells with pride,
And I snap my fingers at a foeman's taunts.

And so do his sisters, and his cousins, and his aunts
His sisters and his cousins!
Whom he reckons by the dozens,
And his aunts!

'I am the lowliest tar
That sails the water.
And you, proud maiden, are
My captain's daughter.'

'Refrain, audacious tar.
Your suit from pressing;
Remember what you are,
And whom addressing.'

For I am called Little Buttercup,--dear Little Buttercup,
Though I never could tell why;
But still I'm called Buttercup,--poor Little Buttercup,
Sweet Little Buttercup I!

Fair moon, to thee I sing
Bright regent of the heavens;
Say, why is every thing
Either at sixes or at sevens!

He is an Englishman!
For he himself has said it,
And it's greatly to his credit
That he is an Englishman.

Fragments From

Love comes to all soon or late,
And maketh gay or sad;
For every bird will find its mate,
And every lass a lad,

Louisa May Alcott

French Song

'J'avais une colombe blanche,
J'avais un blanc petit pigeon,
Tous deux volaient, de branche en branche,
Jusqu'au faîte de mon donjon:
Mais comme un coup de vent d'automne,
S'est abattu là, l'épervier,
Et ma colombe si mignonne
Ne revient plus au colombier.'

Louisa May Alcott

From Our Happy Home

From our happy home
Through the world we roam
One week in all the year,
Making winter spring
With the joy we bring,
For Christmas-tide is here.

Now the eastern star
Shines from afar
To light the poorest home;
Hearts warmer grow,
Gifts freely flow,
For Christmas-tide has come.

Now gay trees rise
Before young eyes,
Abloom with tempting cheer;
Blithe voices sing,
And blithe bells ring,
For Christmas-tide is here.

Oh, happy chime,
Oh, blessed time,
That draws us all so near!
'Welcome, dear day,'
All creatures say,
For Christmas-tide is here.

Louisa May Alcott

From The Short Story A Christmas Dream, And How It Came True

From our happy home
Through the world we roam
One week in all the year,
Making winter spring
With the joy we bring
For Christmas-tide is here.

Now the eastern star
Shines from afar
To light the poorest home;
Hearts warmer grow,
Gifts freely flow,
For Christmas-tide has come.

Now gay trees rise
Before young eyes,
Abloom with tempting cheer;
Blithe voices sing,
And blithe bells ring,
For Christmas-tide is here.

Oh, happy chime,
Oh, blessed time,
That draws us all so near!
"Welcome, dear day,"
All creatures say,
For Christmas-tide is here.

Louisa May Alcott

From The Short Story Shadow-Children

Little shadows, little shadows
Dancing on the chamber wall,
While I sit beside the hearthstone
Where the red flames rise and fall.
Caps and nightgowns, caps and nightgowns,
My three antic shadows wear;
And no sound they make in playing,
For the six small feet are bare.

Dancing gayly, dancing gayly,
To and fro all together,
Like a family of daisies
Blown about in windy weather;
Nimble fairies, nimble fairies,
Playing pranks in the warm glow,
While I sing the nursery ditties
Childish phantoms love and know.

Now what happens, now what happens?
One small shadow's tumbled down:
I can see it on the carpet
Softly rubbing its hurt crown.
No one whimpers, no one whimpers;
A brave-hearted sprite is this:
See! the others offer comfort
In a silent, shadowy kiss.

Hush! they're creeping; hush! they're creeping,
Up about my rocking-chair:
I can feel their loving fingers
Clasp my neck and touch my hair.
Little shadows, little shadows,
Take me captive, hold me tight,
As they climb and cling and whisper,
"Mother dear, good night! good night!"

Louisa May Alcott

From The Short Story What The Swallows Did

Swallow, swallow, neighbor swallow,
Starting on your autumn flight,
Pause a moment at my window,
Twitter softly your good-night;
For the summer days are over,
All your duties are well done,
And the happy homes you builded
Have grown empty, one by one.
Swallow, swallow, neighbor swallow,
Are you ready for your flight?
Are all the feather cloaks completed?
Are the little caps all right?
Are the young wings strong and steady
For the journey through the sky?
Come again in early spring-time;
And till then, good-by, good-by!

Louisa May Alcott

Gingerbread

'Gingerbread,
Go to the head.
Your task is done;
A soul is won.
Take it and go
Where muffins grow,
Where sweet loaves rise
To the very skies,
And biscuits fair
Perfume the air.
Away, away!
Make no delay;
In the sea of flour
Plunge this hour.
Safe in your breast
Let the yeast-cake rest,
Till you rise in joy,
A white bread boy!'

Louisa May Alcott

Give Me Freshening Breeze, My Boys

'Give me freshening breeze, my boys,
A white and swelling sail,
A ship that cuts the dashing waves,
And weathers every gale.
What life is like a sailor's life,
So free, so bold, so brave?
His home the ocean's wide expanse,
A coral bed his grave.'

Louisa May Alcott

He Prayeth Best Who Loveth Best

'He prayeth best who loveth best
All things, both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.'

Louisa May Alcott

He That Is Down Need Fear No Fall

He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low no pride.
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide.

I am content with what I have,
Little be it, or much.
And, Lord! Contentment still I crave,
Because Thou savest such.

Fulness to them a burden is,
That go on pilgrimage.
Here little, and hereafter bliss,
Is best from age to age!

Louisa May Alcott

Healfast, Healfast, Ye Hero Wounds

"Healfast, healfast, ye hero wounds;
O knight, be quickly strong!
Beloved strife
For fame and life,
Oh, tarry not too long!"

Louisa May Alcott

Hello! Hello!

'Hello! hello!
Come down below,--
It's lovely and cool
Out here in the pool;
On a lily-pad float
For a nice green boat.
Here we sit and sing
In a pleasant ring;
Or leap frog play,
In the jolliest way.
Our games have begun,
Come join in the fun.'

Louisa May Alcott

Here Is The Bracelet

'Here is the bracelet
For good little May
To wear on her arm
By night and by day.
When it shines like the sun,
All's going well;
But when you are bad,
A sharp prick will tell.
Farewell, little girl,
For now we must part.
Make a fairy-box, dear,
Of your own happy heart;
And take out for all
Sweet gifts every day,
Till all the year round
Is like beautiful May.'

Louisa May Alcott

Here's A Nut

'Here's a nut, there's a nut;
Hide it quick away,
In a hole, under leaves,
To eat some winter day.
Acorns sweet are plenty,
We will have them all:
Skip and scamper lively
Till the last ones fall.'

Louisa May Alcott

Hither, Hither

Hither, hither, from thy home,
Airy sprite, I bid thee come!
Born of roses, fed on dew,
Charms and potions canst thou brew?
Bring me here, with elfin speed,
The fragrant philter which I need.
Make it sweet and swift and strong,
Spirit, answer now my song!

* * * * *

Hither I come,
From my airy home,
Afar in the silver moon.
Take the magic spell,
And use it well,
Or its power will vanish soon!

Louisa May Alcott

I Wish I Had A Quiet Tomb

'I wish I had a quiet tomb,
Beside a little rill;
Where birds, and bees, and butterflies,
Would sing upon the hill.'

Louisa May Alcott

I Write About The Butterfly

'I write about the butterfly,
It is a pretty thing;
And flies about like the birds,
But it does not sing.

'First it is a little grub,
And then it is a nice yellow cocoon,
And then the butterfly
Eats its way out soon.

'They live on dew and honey,
They do not have any hive,
They do not sting like wasps, and bees, and hornets,
And to be as good as they are we should strive.

Louisa May Alcott

In The Garret

Four little chests all in a row,
Dim with dust, and worn by time,
All fashioned and filled, long ago,
By children now in their prime.
Four little keys hung side by side,
With faded ribbons, brave and gay
When fastened there, with childish pride,
Long ago, on a rainy day.
Four little names, one on each lid,
Carved out by a boyish hand,
And underneath there lieth hid
Histories of the happy band
Once playing here, and pausing oft
To hear the sweet refrain,
That came and went on the roof aloft,
In the falling summer rain.

'Meg' on the first lid, smooth and fair.
I look in with loving eyes,
For folded here, with well-known care,
A goodly gathering lies,
The record of a peaceful life--
Gifts to gentle child and girl,
A bridal gown, lines to a wife,
A tiny shoe, a baby curl.
No toys in this first chest remain,
For all are carried away,
In their old age, to join again
In another small Meg's play.
Ah, happy mother! Well I know
You hear, like a sweet refrain,
Lullabies ever soft and low
In the falling summer rain.

'Jo' on the next lid, scratched and worn,
And within a motley store
Of headless dolls, of schoolbooks torn,
Birds and beasts that speak no more,
Spoils brought home from the fairy ground

Only trod by youthful feet,
Dreams of a future never found,
Memories of a past still sweet,
Half-writ poems, stories wild,
April letters, warm and cold,
Diaries of a wilful child,
Hints of a woman early old,
A woman in a lonely home,
Hearing, like a sad refrain--
'Be worthy, love, and love will come,'
In the falling summer rain.

My Beth! the dust is always swept
From the lid that bears your name,
As if by loving eyes that wept,
By careful hands that often came.
Death canonized for us one saint,
Ever less human than divine,
And still we lay, with tender plaint,
Relics in this household shrine--
The silver bell, so seldom rung,
The little cap which last she wore,
The fair, dead Catherine that hung
By angels borne above her door.
The songs she sang, without lament,
In her prison-house of pain,
Forever are they sweetly blent
With the falling summer rain.

Upon the last lid's polished field--
Legend now both fair and true
A gallant knight bears on his shield,
'Amy' in letters gold and blue.
Within lie snoods that bound her hair,
Slippers that have danced their last,
Faded flowers laid by with care,
Fans whose airy toils are past,
Gay valentines, all ardent flames,
Trifles that have borne their part
In girlish hopes and fears and shames,
The record of a maiden heart
Now learning fairer, truer spells,

Hearing, like a blithe refrain,
The silver sound of bridal bells
In the falling summer rain.

Four little chests all in a row,
Dim with dust, and worn by time,
Four women, taught by weal and woe
To love and labor in their prime.
Four sisters, parted for an hour,
None lost, one only gone before,
Made by love's immortal power,
Nearest and dearest evermore.
Oh, when these hidden stores of ours
Lie open to the Father's sight,
May they be rich in golden hours,
Deeds that show fairer for the light,
Lives whose brave music long shall ring,
Like a spirit-stirring strain,
Souls that shall gladly soar and sing
In the long sunshine after rain.

Louisa May Alcott

Lily-Bell

'Bright shines the summer sun,
Soft is the summer air;
Gayly the wood-birds sing,
Flowers are blooming fair.

'But, deep in the dark, cold rock,
Sadly I dwell,
Longing for thee, dear friend,
Lily-Bell! Lily-Bell!'

'Through sunlight and summer air
I have sought for thee long,
Guided by birds and flowers,
And now by thy song.

'Thistledown! Thistledown!
O'er hill and dell
Hither to comfort thee
Comes Lily-Bell.'

Louisa May Alcott

Lily-Bell And Thistledown Song I

Awake! Awake! for the earliest gleam
Of golden sunlight shines
On the rippling waves, that brightly flow
Beneath the flowering vines.

Awake! Awake! for the low, sweet chant
Of the wild-birds' morning hymn
Comes floating by on the fragrant air,
Through the forest cool and dim;
Then spread each wing,
And work, and sing,
Through the long, bright sunny hours;
O'er the pleasant earth
We journey forth,
For a day among the flowers.

Awake! Awake! for the summer wind
Hath bidden the blossoms unclose,
Hath opened the violet's soft blue eye,
And awakened the sleeping rose.
And lightly they wave on their slender stems
Fragrant, and fresh, and fair,
Waiting for us, as we singing come
To gather our honey-dew there.
Then spread each wing,
And work, and sing,
Through the long, bright sunny hours;
O'er the pleasant earth
We journey forth,
For a day among the flowers.

Louisa May Alcott

Lily-Bell And Thistledown Song II

Thistledown in prison sings:

Bright shines the summer sun,
Soft is the summer air;
Gayly the wood-birds sing,
Flowers are blooming fair.
But, deep in the dark, cold rock,
Sadly I dwell,
Longing for thee, dear friend,
Lily-Bell! Lily-Bell!

Lily-Bell replies:

Through sunlight and summer air
I have sought for thee long,
Guided by birds and flowers,
And now by thy song.

Thistledown! Thistledown!
O'er hill and dell
Hither to comfort thee
Comes Lily-Bell.

Louisa May Alcott

Little Nell

GLEAMING through the silent church-yard,
Winter sunlight seemed to shed
Golden shadows like soft blessings
O'er a quiet little bed,

Where a pale face lay unheeding
Tender tears that o'er it fell;
No sorrow now could touch the heart
Of gentle little Nell.

Ah, with what silent patient strength
The frail form lying there
Had borne its heavy load of grief,
Of loneliness and care.

Now, earthly burdens were laid down,
And on the meek young face
There shone a holier loveliness
Than childhood's simple grace.

Beset with sorrow, pain and fear,
Tempted by want and sin,
With none to guide or counsel her
But the brave child-heart within.

Strong in her fearless, faithful love,
Devoted to the last,
Unfaltering through gloom and gleam
The little wanderer passed.

Hand in hand they journeyed on
Through pathways strange and wild,
The gray-haired, feeble, sin-bowed man
Led by the noble child.

So through the world's dark ways she passed,
Till o'er the church-yard sod,
To the quiet spot where they found rest,
Those little feet had trod.

To that last resting-place on earth
Kind voices bid her come,
There her long wanderings found an end,
And weary Nell a home.

A home whose light and joy she was,
Though on her spirit lay
A solemn sense of coming change,
That deepened day by day.

There in the church-yard, tenderly,
Through quiet summer hours,
Above the poor neglected graves
She planted fragrant flowers.

The dim aisles of the ruined church
Echoed the child's light tread,
And flickering sunbeams thro' the leaves
Shone on her as she read.

And here where a holy silence dwelt,
And golden shadows fell,
When Death's mild face had looked on her,
They laid dear happy Nell.

Long had she wandered o'er the earth,
One hand to the old man given,
By the other angels led her on
Up a sunlit path to Heaven.

Oh! 'patient, loving, noble Nell,'
Like light from sunset skies,
The beauty of thy sinless life
Upon the dark world lies.

On thy sad story, gentle child,
Dim eyes will often dwell,
And loving hearts will cherish long
The memory of Nell.

Little Paul

CHEERFUL voices by the sea-side
Echoed through the summer air,
Happy children, fresh and rosy,
Sang and sported freely there,
Often turning friendly glances,
Where, neglectful of them all,
On his bed among the gray rocks,
Mused the pale child, little Paul.

For he never joined their pastimes,
Never danced upon the sand,
Only smiled upon them kindly,
Only waved his wasted hand.
Many a treasured gift they bore him,
Best beloved among them all.
Many a childish heart grieved sadly,
Thinking of poor little Paul.

But while Florence was beside him,
While her face above him bent,
While her dear voice sounded near him,
He was happy and content;
Watching ever the great billows,
Listening to their ceaseless fall,
For they brought a pleasant music
To the ear of little Paul.

'Sister Floy,' the pale child whispered,
'What is that the blue waves say?
What strange message are they bringing
From that shore so far away?
Who is dwelling in that country
Whence a low voice seems to call
Softly, through the dash of waters,
'Come away, my little Paul?'

But sad Florence could not answer,
Though her dim eyes tenderly
Watched the wistful face, that ever

Gazed across the restless sea,
While the sunshine like a blessing
On his bright hair seemed to fall,
And the winds grew more caressing,
As they kissed frail little Paul.

Ere long, paler and more wasted,
On another bed he lay,
Where the city's din and discord
Echoed round him day by day;
While the voice that to his spirit
By the sea-side seemed to call,
Sounded with its tender music
Very near to little Paul.

As the deep tones of the ocean
Linger in the frailest shell,
So the lonely sea-side musings
In his memory seemed to dwell.
And he talked of golden waters
Rippling on his chamber wall,
While their melody in fancy
Cheered the heart of little Paul.

Clinging fast to faithful Florence,
Murmuring faintly night and day,
Of the swift and darksome river
Bearing him so far away,
Toward a shore whose blessed sunshine
Seemed most radiantly to fall
On a beautiful mild spirit,
Waiting there for little Paul.

So the tide of life ebbed slowly,
Till the last wave died away,
And nothing but the fragile wreck
On the sister's bosom lay.
And from out death's solemn waters,
Lifted high above them all,
In her arms the spirit mother
Bore the soul of little Paul.

Lullaby

Now the day is done,
Now the shepherd sun
Drives his white flocks from the sky;
Now the flowers rest
On their mother's breast,
Hushed by her low lullaby.

Now the glowworms glance,
Now the fireflies dance,
Under fern-boughs green and high;
And the western breeze
To the forest trees
Chants a tuneful lullaby.

Now 'mid shadows deep
Falls blessed sleep,
Like dew from the summer sky;
And the whole earth dreams,
In the moon's soft beams,
While night breathes a lullaby.

Now, birdlings, rest,
In your wind-rocked nest,
Unscared by the owl's shrill cry;
For with folded wings
Little Brier swings,
And singeth your lullaby.

Louisa May Alcott

My Doves

OPPOSITE my chamber window,
On the sunny roof, at play,
High above the city's tumult,
Flocks of doves sit day by day.
Shining necks and snowy bosoms,
Little rosy, tripping feet,
Twinkling eyes and fluttering wings,
Cooing voices, low and sweet,-

Graceful games and friendly meetings,
Do I daily watch and see.
For these happy little neighbors
Always seem at peace to be.
On my window-ledge, to lure them,
Crumbs of bread I often strew,
And, behind the curtain hiding,
Watch them flutter to and fro.

Soon they cease to fear the giver,
Quick are they to feel my love,
And my alms are freely taken
By the shyest little dove.
In soft flight, they circle downward,
Peep in through the window-pane;
Stretch their gleaming necks to greet me,
Peck and coo, and come again.

Faithful little friends and neighbors,
For no wintry wind or rain,
Household cares or airy pastimes,
Can my loving birds restrain.
Other friends forget, or linger,
But each day I surely know
That my doves will come and leave here
Little footprints in the snow.

So, they teach me the sweet lesson,
That the humblest may give
Help and hope, and in so doing,

Learn the truth by which we live;
For the heart that freely scatters
Simple charities and loves,
Lures home content, and joy, and peace,
Like a soft-winged flock of doves.

Louisa May Alcott

My Frost-King - Song I

We are sending you, dear flowers
Forth alone to die,
Where your gentle sisters may not weep
O'er the cold graves where you lie;
But you go to bring them fadeless life
In the bright homes where they dwell,
And you softly smile that't is so,
As we sadly sing farewell.
O plead with gentle words for us,
And whisper tenderly
Of generous love to that cold heart,
And it will answer ye;
And though you fade in a dreary home,
Yet loving hearts will tell
Of the joy and peace that you have given:
Flowers, dear flowers, farewell!

Louisa May Alcott

My Frost-King - Song II

Brighter shone the golden shadows;
On the cool wind softly came
The low, sweet tones of happy flowers,
Singing little Violet's name.
'Mong the green trees was it whispered,
And the bright waves bore it on
To the lonely forest flowers,
Where the glad news had not gone.

Thus the Frost-King lost his kingdom,
And his power to harm and blight.
Violet conquered, and his cold heart
Warmed with music, love, and light;
And his fair home, once so dreary,
Gay with lovely Elves and flowers,
Brought a joy that never faded
Through the long bright summer hours.

Thus, by Violet's magic power,
All dark shadows passed away,
And on the home of happy flowers
The golden light for ever lay.
Thus the Fairy mission ended,
And all Flower-Land was taught
The 'Power of Love,' by gentle deeds
That little Violet wrought.

Louisa May Alcott

My Kingdom

A little kingdom I possess
where thoughts and feelings dwell,
And very hard I find the task
of governing it well;
For passion tempts and troubles me,
A wayward will misleads,
And selfishness its shadow casts
On all my words and deeds.

How can I learn to rule myself,
to be the child I should,
Honest and brave, nor ever tire
Of trying to be good?
How can I keep a sunny soul
To shine along life's way?
How can I tune my little heart
To sweetly sing all day?

Dear Father, help me with the love
that casteth out my fear;
Teach me to lean on thee, and feel
That thou art very near,
That no temptation is unseen
No childish grief too small,
Since thou, with patience infinite,
Doth soothe and comfort all.

I do not ask for any crown
But that which all may win
Nor seek to conquer any world
Except the one within.
Be thou my guide until I find,
Led by a tender hand,
Thy happy kingdom in myself
And dare to take command.

Louisa May Alcott

Our Little Ghost

Oft, in the silence of the night,
When the lonely moon rides high,
When wintry winds are whistling,
And we hear the owl's shrill cry,
In the quiet, dusky chamber,
By the flickering firelight,
Rising up between two sleepers,
Comes a spirit all in white.

A winsome little ghost it is,
Rosy-cheeked, and bright of eye;
With yellow curls all breaking loose
From the small cap pushed awry.
Up it climbs among the pillows,
For the 'big dark' brings no dread,
And a baby's boundless fancy
Makes a kingdom of a bed.

A fearless little ghost it is;
Safe the night seems as the day;
The moon is but a gentle face,
And the sighing winds are gay.
The solitude is full of friends,
And the hour brings no regrets;
For, in this happy little soul,
Shines a sun that never sets.

A merry little ghost it is,
Dancing gayly by itself,
On the flowery counterpane,
Like a tricksy household elf;
Nodding to the fitful shadows,
As they flicker on the wall;
Talking to familiar pictures,
Mimicking the owl's shrill call.

A thoughtful little ghost if is;
And, when lonely gambols tire,
With chubby hands on chubby knees,

It sits winking at the fire.
Fancies innocent and lovely
Shine before those baby-eyes, -
Endless fields of dandelions,
Brooks, and birds, and butterflies.

A loving little ghost it is:
When crept into its nest,
Its hand on father's shoulder laid,
Its head on mother's breast,
It watches each familiar face,
With a tranquil, trusting eye;
And, like a sleepy little bird,
Sings its own soft lullaby.

Then those who feigned to sleep before,
Lest baby play till dawn,
Wake and watch their folded flower -
Little rose without a thorn.
And, in the silence of the night,
The hearts that love it most
Pray tenderly above its sleep,
'God bless our little ghost!'

Louisa May Alcott

'The Frost-King' Song 1

We are sending you, dear flowers
Forth alone to die,
Where your gentle sisters may not weep
O'er the cold graves where you lie;
But you go to bring them fadeless life
In the bright homes where they dwell,
And you softly smile that't is so,
As we sadly sing farewell.
O plead with gentle words for us,
And whisper tenderly
Of generous love to that cold heart,
And it will answer ye;
And though you fade in a dreary home,
Yet loving hearts will tell
Of the joy and peace that you have given:
Flowers, dear flowers, farewell!

Louisa May Alcott

'The Frost-King' Song II

Brighter shone the golden shadows;
On the cool wind softly came
The low, sweet tones of happy flowers,
Singing little Violet's name.
'Mong the green trees was it whispered,
And the bright waves bore it on
To the lonely forest flowers,
Where the glad news had not gone.

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The "Power of Love," by gentle deeds
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Louisa May Alcott

The Lay Of A Golden Goose

Long ago in a poultry yard
One dull November morn,
Beneath a motherly soft wing
A little goose was born.

Who straightway peeped out of the shell
To view the world beyond,
Longing at once to sally forth
And paddle in the pond.

"Oh! be not rash," her father said,
A mild Socratic bird;
Her mother begged her not to stray
With many a warning word.

But little goosey was perverse,
And eagerly did cry,
"I've got a lovely pair of wings,
Of course I ought to fly."

In vain parental cacklings,
In vain the cold sky's frown,
Ambitious goosey tried to soar,
But always tumbled down.

The farmyard jeered at her attempts,
The peacocks screamed, "Oh fie!
You're only a domestic goose,
So don't pretend to fly."

Great cock-a-doodle from his perch
Crowed daily loud and clear,
"Stay in the puddle, foolish bird,
That is your proper sphere,"

The ducks and hens said, one and all,
In gossip by the pool,
"Our children never play such pranks;
My dear, that fowl's a fool."

The owls came out and flew about,
Hooting above the rest,
"No useful egg was ever hatched
From transcendental nest."

Good little goslings at their play
And well-conducted chicks
Were taught to think poor goosey's flights
Were naughty, ill-bred tricks.

They were content to swim and scratch,
And not at all inclined
For any wild goose chase in search
Of something undefined.

Hard times she had as one may guess,
That young aspiring bird,
Who still from every fall arose
Saddened but undeterred.

She knew she was no nightingale
Yet spite of much abuse,
She longed to help and cheer the world,
Although a plain gray goose

She could not sing, she could not fly,
Nor even walk, with grace,
And all the farmyard had declared
A puddle was her place.

But something stronger than herself
Would cry, "Go on, go on!
Remember, though an humble fowl,
You're cousin to a swan."

So up and down poor goosey went,
A busy, hopeful bird.
Searched many wide unfruitful fields,
And many waters stirred.

At length she came unto a stream

Most fertile of all Niles,
Where tuneful birds might soar and sing
Among the leafy isles.

Here did she build a little nest
Beside the waters still,
Where the parental goose could rest
Unvexed by any bill.

And here she paused to smooth her plumes,
Ruffled by many plagues;
When suddenly arose the cry,
"This goose lays golden eggs."

At once the farmyard was agog;
The ducks began to quack;
Prim Guinea fowls relenting called,
"Come back, come back, come back."

Great chanticler was pleased to give
A patronizing crow,
And the contemptuous biddies clucked,
"I wish my chicks did so."

The peacocks spread their shining tails,
And cried in accents soft,
"We want to know you, gifted one,
Come up and sit aloft."

Wise owls awoke and gravely said,
With proudly swelling breasts,
"Rare birds have always been evoked
From transcendental nests!"

News-hunting turkeys from afar
Now ran with all thin legs
To gobble facts and fictions of
The goose with golden eggs.

But best of all the little fowls
Still playing on the shore,
Soft downy chicks and goslings gay,

Chirped out, "Dear Goose, lay more."

But goosey all these weary years
Had toiled like any ant,
And wearied out she now replied
"My little dears, I can't.

"When I was starving, half this corn
Had been of vital use,
Now I am surfeited with food
Like any Strasbourg goose."

So to escape too many friends,
Without uncivil strife,
She ran to the Atlantic pond
And paddled for her life.

Soon up among the grand old Alps
She found two blessed things,
The health she had so nearly lost,
And rest for weary limbs.

But still across the briny deep
Couched in most friendly words,
Came prayers for letters, tales, or verse
From literary birds.

Whereat the renovated fowl
With grateful thanks profuse,
Took from her wing a quill and wrote
This lay of a Golden Goose.

Louisa May Alcott

The Mother Moon

THE moon upon the wide sea
Placidly looks down,
Smiling with her mild face,
Though the ocean frown.
Clouds may dim her brightness,
But soon they pass away,
And she shines out, unaltered,
O'er the little waves at play.
So 'mid the storm or sunshine,
Wherever she may go,
Led on by her hidden power
The wild sea must plow.

As the tranquil evening moon
Looks on that restless sea,
So a mother's gentle face,
Little child, is watching thee.
Then banish every tempest,
Chase all your clouds away,
That smoothly and brightly
Your quiet heart may play.
Let cheerful looks and actions
Like shining ripples flow,
Following the mother's voice,
Singing as they go.

Louisa May Alcott

The Rock And The Bubble

Oh! a bare, brown rock
Stood up in the sea,
The waves at its feet
Dancing merrily.

A little bubble
Once came sailing by,
And thus to the rock
Did it gayly cry,--

"Ho! clumsy brown stone,
Quick, make way for me:
I'm the fairest thing
That floats on the sea.

"See my rainbow-robe,
See my crown of light,
My glittering form,
So airy and bright.

"O'er the waters blue,
I'm floating away,
To dance by the shore
With the foam and spray.

"Now, make way, make way;
For the waves are strong,
And their rippling feet
Bear me fast along."

But the great rock stood
Straight up in the sea:
It looked gravely down,
And said pleasantly--

"Little friend, you must
Go some other way;
For I have not stirred
this many a long day.

"Great billows have dashed,
And angry winds blown;
But my sturdy form
Is not overthrown.

"Nothing can stir me
In the air or sea;
Then, how can I move,
Little friend, for thee?"

Then the waves all laughed
In their voices sweet;
And the sea-birds looked,
From their rocky seat,

At the bubble gay,
Who angrily cried,
While its round cheek glowed
With a foolish pride,--

"You SHALL move for me;
And you shall not mock
At the words I say,
You ugly, rough rock.

"Be silent, wild birds!
While stare you so?
Stop laughing, rude waves,
And help me to go!

"For I am the queen
Of the ocean here,
And this cruel stone
Cannot make me fear."

Dashing fiercely up,
With a scornful word,
Foolish Bubble broke;
But Rock never stirred.

Then said the sea-birds,

Sitting in their nests
To the little ones
Leaning on their breasts,--

"Be not like Bubble,
Headstrong, rude, and vain,
Seeking by violence
Your object to gain;

"But be like the rock,
Steadfast, true, and strong,
Yet cheerful and kind,
And firm against wrong.

"Heed, little birdlings,
And wiser you'll be
For the lesson learned
To-day by the sea."

Louisa May Alcott

'The Rose Family' Song 1

O flower at my window
Why blossom you so fair,
With your green and purple cup
Upturned to sun and air?
'I bloom, blithesome Bessie,
To cheer your childish heart;
The world is full of labor,
And this shall be my part.'
Whirl, busy wheel, faster,
Spin, little thread, spin;
The sun shines fair without,
And we are gay within.

O robin in the tree-top,
With sunshine on your breast,
Why brood you so patiently
Above your hidden nest?
'I brood, blithesome Bessie,
And sing my humble song,
That the world may have more music
From my little ones erelong.'
Whirl, busy wheel, faster,
Spin, little thread, spin;
The sun shines fair without,
And we are gay within.

O balmy wind of summer,
O silver-singing brook,
Why rustle through the branches?
Why shimmer in your nook?
'I flutter, blithesome Bessie,
Like a blessing far and wide;
I scatter bloom and verdure
Where'er my footsteps glide.'
Whirl, busy wheel, faster,
Spin, little thread, spin;
The sun shines fair without,
And we are gay within.

O brook and breeze and blossom,
And robin on the tree,
You make a joy of duty,
A pride of industry;
Teach me to work as blithely,
With a willing hand and heart:
The world is full of labor,
And I must do my part.
Whirl, busy wheel, faster,
Spin, little thread, spin;
The sun shines fair without,
And we are gay within.

Louisa May Alcott

'The Rose Family' Song II

O lesson well and wisely taught
Stay with me to the last,
That all my life may better be
For the trial that is past.
O vanity, mislead no more!
Sleep, like passions, long!
Wake, happy heart, and dance again
To the music of my song!

O summer days, flit fast away,
And bring the blithesome hour
When we three wanderers shall meet
Safe in our household flower!
O dear mamma, lament no more!
Smile on us as we come,
Your grief has been our punishment,
Your love has led us home.

Louisa May Alcott

Thoreau's Flute

We sighing said, "Our Pan is dead;
His pipe hangs mute beside the river
Around it wistful sunbeams quiver,
But Music's airy voice is fled.
Spring mourns as for untimely frost;
The bluebird chants a requiem;
The willow-blossom waits for him;
The Genius of the wood is lost."

Then from the flute, untouched by hands,
There came a low, harmonious breath:
"For such as he there is no death;
His life the eternal life commands;
Above man's aims his nature rose.
The wisdom of a just content
Made one small spot a continent
And turned to poetry life's prose.

"Haunting the hills, the stream, the wild,
Swallow and aster, lake and pine,
To him grew human or divine,
Fit mates for this large-hearted child.
Such homage Nature ne'er forgets,
And yearly on the coverlid
'Neath which her darling lieth hid
Will write his name in violets.

"To him no vain regrets belong
Whose soul, that finer instrument,
Gave to the world no poor lament,
But wood-notes ever sweet and strong.
O lonely friend! he still will be
A potent presence, though unseen,
Steadfast, sagacious, and serene;
Seek not for him -- he is with thee."

Louisa May Alcott

To The First Born

WELCOME, welcome, little stranger,
Fear no harm, and fear no danger;
We are glad to see you here,
For you sing 'Sweet Spring is near.'

Now the white snow melts away;
Now the flowers blossom gay:
Come dear bird and build your nest,
For we love our robin best.

Louisa May Alcott

Transfiguration

Mysterious death! who in a single hour
Life's gold can so refine
And by thy art divine
Change mortal weakness to immortal power!

Bending beneath the weight of eighty years
Spent with the noble strife
of a victorious life
We watched her fading heavenward, through our tears.

But ere the sense of loss our hearts had wrung
A miracle was wrought;
And swift as happy thought
She lived again -- brave, beautiful, and young.

Age, pain, and sorrow dropped the veils they wore
And showed the tender eyes
Of angels in disguise,
Whose discipline so patiently she bore.

The past years brought their harvest rich and fair;
While memory and love,
Together, fondly wove
A golden garland for the silver hair.

How could we mourn like those who are bereft,
When every pang of grief
found balm for its relief
In counting up the treasures she had left?--

Faith that withstood the shocks of toil and time;
Hope that defied despair;
Patience that conquered care;
And loyalty, whose courage was sublime;

The great deep heart that was a home for all--
Just, eloquent, and strong
In protest against wrong;
Wide charity, that knew no sin, no fall;

The spartan spirit that made life so grand,
Mating poor daily needs
With high, heroic deeds,
That wrested happiness from Fate's hard hand.

We thought to weep, but sing for joy instead,
Full of the grateful peace
That follows her release;
For nothing but the weary dust lies dead.

Oh, noble woman! never more a queen
Than in the laying down
Of sceptre and of crown
To win a greater kingdom, yet unseen;

Teaching us how to seek the highest goal,
To earn the true success --
To live, to love, to bless --
And make death proud to take a royal soul.

Louisa May Alcott

Y Are The Maiden Posies

"Y' are the maiden posies,
And so graced,
To be placed
Fore damask roses.
Yet, though thus respected,
By and by
Ye do lie,
Poor girls, neglected.'

Louisa May Alcott