

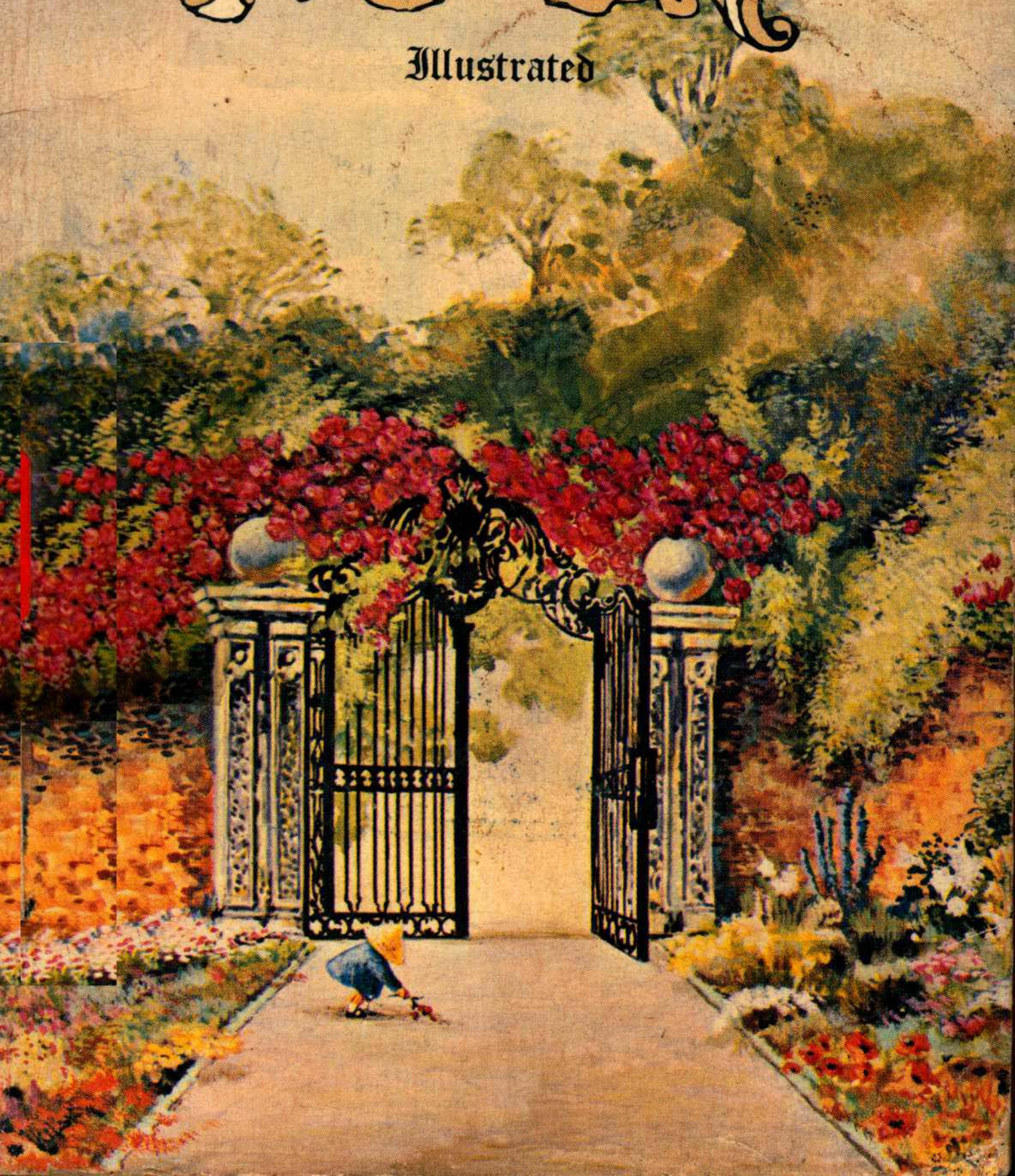


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CLASSICS SERIES CL195

*A Child's
Garden of Verses*
Robert Louis Stevenson

Illustrated



A CHILD'S GARDEN OF VERSES

A Child's
Garden of Verses
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON



AIRMONT PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.
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ISBN: 0-8049-0195-3 A CHILD'S GARDEN OF VERSES

TO ALISON CUNNINGHAM

FROM HER BOY

For the long nights you lay awake
And watched for my unworthy sake:
For your most comfortable hand
That led me through the uneven land:
For all the story-books you read:
For all the pains you comforted:

For all you pitied, all you bore,
In sad and happy days of yore:—
My second Mother, my first Wife,
The angel of my infant life—
From the sick child, now well and old,
Take, nurse, the little book you hold!

And grant it, Heaven, that all who read
May find as dear a nurse at need,
And every child who lists my rhyme,
In the bright, fireside, nursery clime,
May hear it in as kind a voice
As made my childish days rejoice!

R. L. S.

*A Child's
Garden
of Verses*

Robert
Louis
Stevenson



INTRODUCTION

Open this book and read aloud the poems that are on its pages. They are all simple, but the children who hear them as well as the adults who read them will immediately recognize that Robert Louis Stevenson knew a great deal about the way young people think and feel, for in them he has perfectly described the child's world of imagination. As we grow older we lose that precious ability that Stevenson recounts of living a life of adventure while still safe behind a chair in the living room, or sailing the seas while still snug in bed. But the very small can see much in what grown-

ups take at surface value: the wind howling around the house at night, the first birdcall in the morning, a leaf floating on a stream. Grownups are frequently alone, but children always have their unseen playmate, their own imagination, who can make even the most ordinary amusements or pastimes exciting and fun.

The Scottish poet, essayist and novelist who wrote this remarkable collection was born in Edinburgh on November 13, 1850. Although he was a weak child and had frequent bouts with ill health, his ambitious father, a civil engineer, wanted his only son and only child to study engineering, but this career did not have the slightest appeal to Robert who had early expressed a preference for books and writing. However, as a second suitable alternative, Stevenson's father convinced him to study law. But Stevenson never practiced the law even though he was admitted to the bar. His adult life was spent far differently from the life of the staid, middle class, the role his father had tried to urge upon him. While in school he set himself the task of imitating the prose style of writers he admired, and in this way he began to develop his own sturdy style.

While in France (for the rest of his life Steven-

son would travel trying to find the right climate to best preserve his health) Stevenson met an attractive American woman, Fanny Vandergrift Osbourne, and fell in love. Mrs. Osbourne was separated from her husband, but returned to her native California. The romantic Stevenson was, however, undaunted by the move and decided to pursue his love across the ocean, a course of action which was much disapproved by his parents. In 1879 Stevenson undertook a very difficult trip to America. But, fortunately for Stevenson, this story had a happy ending, for Fanny Osbourne obtained a divorce from her first husband and married Stevenson. At first they lived destitute and roughed it by camping in California, but the elder Stevensons finally gave their reluctant approval and the three, Robert, Fanny, and her small son Lloyd, returned to Europe.

It was in Switzerland that Stevenson began, for the amusement of Lloyd, a series of parlor readings that culminated in one of his most widely read adventure stories, *Treasure Island*. *A Child's Garden of Verses* was also composed with Lloyd in mind. Stevenson had been living in Scotland, and there wrote two of his most famous short stories, "Thrawn Janet" and "The Merry Men,"

but the Scottish weather proved to be too much for his lungs and he moved on to France. In France he began *A Child's Garden of Verses* and finished it when he returned to England. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* emerged from Stevenson's pen at this time and insured Stevenson's fame.

Still in search of a beneficial climate Stevenson returned to America and lived in the Adirondacks. Finally, he began a voyage in hope of permanent relief from his chronic tuberculosis. With his wife he sailed from San Francisco. It was his last journey for he spent the rest of his life in the South Seas and died in Samoa in 1894.

Although some of his fiction reflected the pain and suffering that Stevenson endured throughout his life, *A Child's Garden of Verses* is writing of sunshine and innocence and expresses the two lines of his short and often quoted poem from the *Garden*:

The world is so full of a number of things
That I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

This is the world that is the child's birthright.

*A Child's
Garden of Verses*

Robert Louis Stevenson

With illustrations by
Leon Gregori

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CONTENTS

BED IN SUMMER	21
A THOUGHT	22
AT THE SEA-SIDE	23
YOUNG NIGHT-THOUGHT	24
WHOLE DUTY OF CHILDREN	27
RAIN	27
PIRATE STORY	28
FOREIGN LANDS	29
WINDY NIGHTS	30
TRAVEL	31
SINGING	33
LOOKING FORWARD	34
A GOOD PLAY	35
WHERE GO THE BOATS?	36
AUNTIE'S SKIRTS	37
THE LAND OF COUNTERPANE	38
THE LAND OF NOD	39
MY SHADOW	40
SYSTEM	42

A GOOD BOY	43
ESCAPE AT BEDTIME	44
MARCHING SONG	45
THE COW	46
HAPPY THOUGHT	47
THE WIND	48
KEEPSAKE MILL	49
GOOD AND BAD CHILDREN	51
FOREIGN CHILDREN	52
THE SUN TRAVELS	53
THE LAMPLIGHTER	54
MY BED IS A BOAT	55
THE MOON	56
THE SWING	57
TIME TO RISE	58
LOOKING-GLASS RIVER	59
FAIRY BREAD	61
FROM A RAILWAY CARRIAGE	62
WINTER-TIME	63
THE HAYLOFT	64
FAREWELL TO THE FARM	65

NORTH-WEST PASSAGE	66
1. Good-Night	66
2. Shadow March	67
3. In Port	68

THE CHILD ALONE

THE UNSEEN PLAYMATE	71
MY SHIP AND I	73
MY KINGDOM	75
PICTURE-BOOKS IN WINTER	79
MY TREASURES	80
BLOCK CITY	81
THE LAND OF STORY-BOOKS	83
ARMIES IN THE FIRE	85
THE LITTLE LAND	86