

A Child's Garden of Verses

by Robert Louis Stevenson

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.

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A Child's Garden of Verses

I Bed in Summer

In winter I get up at night And dress by yellow candle-light.
In summer quite the other way, I have to go to bed by day.

I have to go to bed and see The birds still hopping on the tree,
Or hear the grown-up people's feet Still going past me in the street.

And does it not seem hard to you, When all the sky is clear and blue,
And I should like so much to play, To have to go to bed by day?

II A Thought

It is very nice to think The world is full of meat and
drink, With little children saying grace In every Christian
kind of place.

III At the Sea-side

When I was down beside the sea A wooden spade they
gave to me To dig the sandy shore.

My holes were empty like a cup. In every hole the sea
came up, Till it could come no more.

IV Young Night-Thought

All night long and every night, When my mama puts out
the light, I see the people marching by, As plain as day
before my eye.

Armies and emperor and kings, All carrying different
kinds of things, And marching in so grand a way, You
never saw the like by day.

So fine a show was never seen At the great circus on the
green; For every kind of beast and man Is marching in that
caravan.

As first they move a little slow, But still the faster on they
go, And still beside me close I keep Until we reach the
town of Sleep.

V Whole Duty of Children

A child should always say what's true And speak when he
is spoken to, And behave mannerly at table; At least as far
as he is able.

VI Rain

The rain is falling all around, It falls on field and tree, It rains on the umbrellas here, And on the ships at sea.

VII Pirate Story

Three of us afloat in the meadow by the swing, Three of us abroad in the basket on the lea. Winds are in the air, they are blowing in the spring, And waves are on the meadow like the waves there are at sea.

Where shall we adventure, to-day that we're afloat, Wary of the weather and steering by a star? Shall it be to Africa, a-steering of the boat, To Providence, or Babylon or off to Malabar?

Hi! but here's a squadron a-rowing on the sea-Cattle on the meadow a-charging with a roar! Quick, and we'll escape them, they're as mad as they can be, The wicket is the harbour and the garden is the shore.

VIII Foreign Lands

Up into the cherry tree Who should climb but little me? I
held the trunk with both my hands And looked abroad in
foreign lands.

I saw the next door garden lie, Adorned with flowers,
before my eye, And many pleasant places more That I had
never seen before.

I saw the dimpling river pass And be the sky's blue
looking-glass; The dusty roads go up and down With
people tramping in to town.

If I could find a higher tree Farther and farther I should
see, To where the grown-up river slips Into the sea among
the ships,

To where the road on either hand Lead onward into fairy
land,Where all the children dine at five,And all the
playthings come alive.

IX Windy Nights

Whenever the moon and stars are set,Whenever the wind
is high,All night long in the dark and wet,A man goes
riding by.Late in the night when the fires are out,Why
does he gallop and gallop about?

Whenever the trees are crying aloud,And ships are tossed
at sea,By, on the highway, low and loud,By at the gallop
goes he.By at the gallop he goes, and then By he comes
back at the gallop again.

X Travel

I should like to rise and go Where the golden apples
grow;-Where below another sky Parrot islands anchored

lie,And, watched by cockatoos and goats,Lonely Crusoes
building boats;-Where in sunshine reaching out Eastern
cities, miles about,Are with mosque and minaret Among
sandy gardens set,And the rich goods from near and far
Hang for sale in the bazaar;-Where the Great Wall round
China goes,And on one side the desert blows,And with the
voice and bell and drum,Cities on the other hum;-Where
are forests hot as fire,Wide as England, tall as a spire,Full
of apes and cocoa-nuts And the negro hunters' huts;-
Where the knotty crocodile Lies and blinks in the
Nile,And the red flamingo flies Hunting fish before his
eyes;-Where in jungles near and far,Man-devouring tigers
are,Lying close and giving ear Lest the hunt be drawing
near,Or a comer-by be seen Swinging in the palanquin;-
Where among the desert sands Some deserted city
stands,All its children, sweep and prince,Grown to
manhood ages since,Not a foot in street or house,Not a stir
of child or mouse,And when kindly falls the night,In all
the town no spark of light.There I'll come when I'm a man
With a camel caravan;Light a fire in the gloom Of some

dusty dining-room; See the pictures on the walls, Heroes
fights and festivals; And in a corner find the toys Of the
old Egyptian boys.

XI Singing

Of speckled eggs the birdie sings And nests among the
trees; The sailor sings of ropes and things In ships upon the
seas.

The children sing in far Japan, The children sing in
Spain; The organ with the organ man Is singing in the rain.

XII Looking Forward

When I am grown to man's estate I shall be very proud
and great, And tell the other girls and boys Not to meddle
with my toys.

XIII A Good Play

We built a ship upon the stairs All made of the back-
bedroom chairs, And filled it full of soft pillows To go a-
sailing on the billows.

We took a saw and several nails, And water in the nursery
pails; And Tom said, "Let us also take An apple and a slice
of cake;" - Which was enough for Tom and me To go a-
sailing on, till tea.

We sailed along for days and days, And had the very best
of plays; But Tom fell out and hurt his knee, So there was
no one left but me.

XIV Where Go the Boats?

Dark brown is the river, Golden is the sand. It flows along
for ever, With trees on either hand.

Green leaves a-floating, Castles of the foam, Boats of mi
a-boating-Where will all come home?

On goes the river And out past the mill, Away down the
valley, Away down the hill.

Away down the river, A hundred miles or more, Other little
children Shall bring my boats ashore.

XV Auntie's Skirts

Whenever Auntie moves around, Her dresses make a
curious sound, They trail behind her up the floor, And
trundle after through the door.

XVI The Land of Counterpane