

## PICTURES AND SONGS OF HOME

PICTURES AND SONG'S OF HOME was written by Frances Browne with her home town of Stranorlar in mind. Frances mentions family members and reminisces on her youth. She mentions people, places and events which were dear to her as a child and the reader may identify with her thoughts on the various topics. Frances' poems are republished here in celebration of the bicentenary of her birth on 16/JAN/2016.

MY BOAT ON THE LAKE

THE WARNING

GATHERING WILD FLOWERS

I USED TO THINK

OUR GARDEN

SISTR MARY AND BROTHER JOHN

OUR COUSINS FAR OFF IN THE WEST

THE FIRST WALK

OUR LITTLE ROSE

ROBIN'S WELCOME

A BETTER SON

EVENING PRAYER

BEFORE MY BROTHER WENT TO SEA

LOOK UP MY CHILD

THE SEVEN BIRTHDAYS

THE CHILD AND THE LAMB

RICH AND POOR

THE YOUNG AND OLD

MY FATHER'S HOUSE UPON THE HILL.

## MY BOAT ON THE LAKE



---

I once made a boat at the midsummer time

When our lake was so glassy and still,

I was proud of her build, I was proud of her trim,

And rejoiced in the might of my skill.

She was small, and her timbers were not over

Strong,

But I thought they might weather a blast;

A pair of white sails bore her gaily along,

And a red flag flew high from the mast.

I launched her in triumph! My young sisters stood

In wonder the voyage to see;

Poor Watch too was there, saying, plain as he

Could,

There will none of you drown without me.

She went like the wind, and my glory was high,

As a monarch's might be in his crown.

But just in the middle, I never know why,

The light vessel heeled and went down.

With her disappeared the delight of the day---

The hope of my holidays all---

The labour of hours that were borrowed from

Play---

The savings so prized and so small.

Poor Watch, at my bidding, plunged in at the

Spot

Where last we had seen her float,

The dog came to shore again weary and wet,

But he never could bring back the boat.

Since then I have steered a good ship on the sea,

I've weathered the winds of the world,

And seen the red cross from the mast flying free,

When around it the cannon smoke curled.

I've learned to take wisely life's sunshine or gale;  
I trust a fair haven to make;  
But many a brave hope that went out in full sail  
Has gone down like my boat on the lake.

## THE WARNING



---

Under a tree, and by a well,  
There stands a cottage in yonder dell;  
Within that cot live children there,  
Such children did you never see.

They quarrel at meals, they quarrel at play,  
They quarrel, I'm told, both night and day;  
For every-one wants every-thing,  
And peace from the house has taken wing.

Their voices have got the quarrellers tone,  
Their faces to quarrellers looks have grown;  
Then lest you come to lead their life,  
Brothers and sisters cease from strife.

## GATHERING WILD FLOWERS



---

They were blithe times with us when the  
    Summer had come,  
With the nightingale's song, and the honey-bee's  
    Hum,  
With lilies, and roses, and long sunny hours,  
And holiday goings to gather wild flowers.

We went all together, one bright afternoon,  
When warm on the woods lay the sunlight of

June,

And up in the sky was a blueness, as clear

As if not a cloud had been there all the year.

Old grandmother went with her staff in her hand,

She said, 'To see summer once more in the land,'

While good uncle William walked cheerfully by,

And, we had such baskets, my sister and I.

'Twas sweet in the meadows, 'twas sweet in the

Woods,

And great was our gathering of blossoms and

Buds,

By the banks of bright streams, by the roots of

Old trees,

Where nestled the wild birds, and feasted the bees.

Then home with light hearts and full baskets we

Sped,

When sunset was tinging the old church with red,

But paused at our gate to look back on the view,

How rich in the gold of the evening it grew.

And grandmother said, as she gazed on the sky,  
With thoughts of her seventy long summers  
Gone by,  
'What glory must gladden that good land of ours,  
When this earth is so fair in the time of wild  
Flowers.

## I USED TO THINK



---

I used to think there would be fun  
When all my going to school was done,  
And all my lessons o'er;  
When my good master---I thought him then  
The worst and wildest of mortal men---  
Should hear my tasks no more.

Well, now, the school time all is past,

I'm out of my master's thrall at last,  
And sent to business here.  
Yet the days of grumbling' are not gone,  
Fortunes may change, but they last on,  
Still fresh from year to year.

## OUR GARDEN



---

It was gay in the spring-time of the year  
It was fair at autumn's close;  
We heard the earliest cuckoo there,  
And we saw the latest rose.  
The heart-ease and forget-me-not,  
They were natives of that ground;  
Our garden was the sunniest spot



In all the country round.

There was many a quaint and bowery nook.

Where we sat in summer's heat,

And listened to the silvery brook,

That murmured at our feet.

There were herbs of old belief and fame,

There were hives of busy bees,

And a swell of leafy sounds, that came

When the wind was in the trees.

We had little gardens every one,

Myself and my brothers two,

And my sister, who is dead and gone;

But the best of all it grew.

I cannot tell if the primrose time

Comes now, as we knew it then;

But still in the April nights I dream

We are there at work again.

The merry swing and the mossy well

Were hard by my mother's bower,

Where the morning rose and the evening fell

Through a screen of leaf and flower.  
And pleasant was old Robin's pride  
In the seasons he had known,  
And the long long years that by his side  
The silent flowers had grown.

He said the hawthorn hedge had put  
Forth near a hundred Mays,  
And boughs from the holly he had cut  
For fifty Christmas days;  
That the cedar stood as large and tall  
At the time when he was young,  
And ever since in the ivy wall  
Had his namesake built and sung.

The turf above old Robin's breast  
Is lying green and cold;  
The home and the garden we loved best  
To a stranger's hand are sold.  
He has planted hops where the roses grew,  
He has hewn the cedar down;  
And we look out all summer through  
On the streets of this great town.

## SISTER MARY AND BROTHER JOHN



---

They had one seat in a mossy nook,  
They learned their lessons from one old book,  
And played together by lane and brook.

At home or abroad, in house or lawn,  
When holidays reigned, or school came on,  
‘Twas “Sisier Mary and Brother John.”

They feared not the sun that made them brown,  
They cared not for winter’s frosty frown,  
Nor minded how fast the rain came down.

Parting was all their fear and dread;  
Father and mother both were dead,  
And left them little, the neighbours said.

But Mary and John had laid a scheme  
For future days when their fortune came,  
And they were playing the grown up game.

They would have a cottage of their own,  
With roses, and woodbine overgrown,  
And the largest fig-tree ever known.

There they would live their whole lives through,  
And watch how the figs and roses grew;  
I wonder if it all came true!

For far from our village they have gone,  
And none can tell us how things go on  
With "Sister Mary and Brother John."

## OUR COUSINS FAR OFF IN THE WEST



---

'Tis long since we bid them farewell,  
One morning, with blessings and tears,  
Their farm at the foot of the fell,  
A stranger has tilled it for years.  
Beyond the wide sea is their home;  
Yet still we remember them best,  
And welcome the letters that come,  
FRom our cousins far off in the west.

They tell us of forests and floods,  
With names never heard on our shore,

Of towns growing up, where the woods  
Had waved but the summer before;  
Of churches and homes like our own,  
Where families labour and rest,  
No strangers to us have they grown,  
Our cousins far off in the west.

## THE FIRST WALK



---

A wondrous venture it must be,  
My trembling little one, for thee  
To trust thy feeble feet  
Upon this hard old earth of ours;  
And thou hast summoned all thy powers  
The mighty task to meet.

There's caution in that look of thine

And in the hand that clings to mine,  
    With clasp so keen and small;  
Yet thou wilt learn to jump and run  
Through the green meadows in the sun,  
    And never fear a fall.

These are thy faint first steps in life,  
And though they seem with danger rife,  
    The peril is not there.  
But in thine after goings, child !-  
For oh this world is wide and wild,  
    And much more false than fair!

I cannot tell what stranger shore  
These timid feet may journey o'er-  
    What desert bleak and broad;  
But I can truly hope and pray  
That thou may'st walk in wisdom's way,  
    And humbly with thy God.

## OUR LITTLE ROSE



---

How early she went from our hearth and our  
play,

The youngest of all, yet the first called away,  
And oh, but the sorrow was sore!

No losses nor partings till then had we seen;  
No discord, no changes among us had been;  
No death in our dwelling before.

At times we are weary and sad for her yet;  
I know that my mother will never forget.

She says it is sinful to grieve;



But we miss the blithe tone, and we miss the  
    bright face,  
And her seat by the fire is a sorrowful place,  
    At the fall of the dark winter eve.

For now in the churchyard our hearts have a  
Share;  
Since over the sleep of our sister there,  
    The grass of the summer-time grows.  
But have we not learned that a better home lies  
Above the green grave, and above the blue skies!  
    And there we'll meet our little Rose.

## ROBIN'S WELCOME



---

The summer leaves have perished,  
    The harvest corn is gone,  
Thy head can find no shelter  
    When the heavy storm comes on.

But in our dwelling waits thee

A welcome, kind and free,

And while there's bread among us

We have a crumb for thee.

Thou hast sung beside our door, Robin,

When the spring was drawing near.

Thou hast cheered our fading garden

In the leaf-fall of the year.

From cottage roof, or ruin,

From tree-top bare and brown;

Like a voice sent back from summer

Thy silvery notes came down.

Through many a land and age, Robin,

The children know thee thus:

Thou wert welcome to our fathers,

Thou art welcome now to us.

And men of toil and travel

In far off lands that roam,

Still greet thee as the household friend,

The kindly bird of home.

Come in from the fierce wind, Robin,  
And from the drifting snow;  
Thou shalt have rest and refuge,  
Thou shalt be free to go:  
And when the evenings brighten,  
And winter slacks his reign;  
Before the violet blossoms  
Thou shalt sing to us again.

## A BETTER SON



An old man to our hearth had come,  
One evening in the time of snow,  
He told us of his childhood home,

And of his parents long ago:  
How much for him they worked and prayed-  
How long their toils and prayers were done;  
And then the old man sighing said,  
“If I had been a better son”

We never knew what early sin  
Called forth that aged traveller’s sigh,  
But often have I thought since then,  
My parents must grow old and die;  
And mine may be a grief as keen  
For harsh words said, or follies done;  
Therefore, my daily prayer has been;  
Therefore, my daily prayer has been  
That I might be a better son.

## THE EVENING PRAYER



In the solemn shade of the twilight sky,  
Which tells of another day gone by,  
In the hush of thy home, so calm and free,  
Thou art kneeling, child! at thy mother's knee.

And they that kneel in the proudest fane,  
Of sculptured pillar, and picture pictured pane,  
Of breathing censer, and jewelled shrine,  
Have found no alter more blest than thine.

For there thou hast learned to praise His might,  
Who guides the march of the day and night ;  
And there thou hast learned to seek his grace,  
Who makes with the meek his dwelling-place.

Say will that lesson long abide

When thou are far from thy mother's side,  
When the hair is grey---or the grave is green  
Of her, that thine earliest love hath been.

When the snares of life are around thee set,  
And the cares have come which thou knowest not

Yet;

When business calls thee at early day,  
And memories deepen the evening's gray.

Whate'er the course of thine after track,  
Whate'er the change, will thy heart come back,  
In spite of sin, and in spite of snare,  
To thy mother's knee and thine evening prayer?

**BEFORE MY BROTHER WENT TO SEA**



-----  
--

We did not mind the winters then,  
    Nor care how loud the wind might blow;  
The snow might fall, and freeze again,  
    The lowering clouds might come and go;  
Our home was blithe, our hearts were free,  
    Before my brother went to see.

But now my mother's cheek grows white  
    To hear the rising of the blast;  
My father's look has lost its light,  
    And slow the stormy months go past.

Things are not as they used to be,  
Before my brother went to see.

Yet, though the ocean wastes be wide  
I know that Providence is there;  
Nor can the winds and wave divide

Our absent from His careless care.

Therefore, at times, it seems to me,

“My brother will come safe from sea.”

## LOOK UP MY CHILD



---

To yonder blue and boundless dome,  
That bend's o'er river, hill and home,  
Wherein the sun his circuit makes,  
Where the mild moon by night awaits,  
When morning breaks, when evening falls,  
From whence the mighty thunder calls.  
Where rainbows rise, where clouds are piled  
Above man's reach---Look up my child.

That sky was all as brightly blue  
When Adam gazed, and Ede grew,



Though centuries since then have rolled,  
It has not altered, or grown old,  
But speaks to every heart and eye  
Of him who built its arch so high,  
And spread it forth, o'er wave and wild,  
To tell his praise---Look up my child.

This earth, though it be fair to see,  
With hill and valley, stream and tree,  
Hath change without---hath graves within,  
And many a trace of tears and sin.  
Then lift thine eyes, and lift thy heart,  
And seek beyond the skies thy part,  
Where stands that city undefiled  
Through life and death---Look up my child.

## THE SEVEN BIRTHDAYS



---

We had seven birthdays in the year;  
We kept them all with merry cheer,  
For father, mother and sisters three,  
For brother Alfred, and for me.

Some came round with the winter's snows,  
Some with midsummer and with rose,  
Some at the time when the brown leaves fall,  
But there were games and gifts for all.

Father's was kept with home brewed ale,  
Mother's was kept with talk and tale,  
Sisters' were kept with frills and frocks,  
Alfred's and mine with woodland walks.

'Tis long ago, and the churchyard yew  
Bends o'er father and mother too;  
Brother and sisters all have grown,  
To troubles, and houses of their own.

The years are busy, the world is wide,  
We have scattered far from the old fireside.  
Some mind the ledger, some mind the plough

But where are the seven brave birthdays now?

## THE CHILD AND THE LAMB



---

My pretty lamb with snowy fleece'

With low and tender bleat,

And feet that o'er the daisies fly

So soundless and so fleet.

To meet me when I come in sight,

Through sunshine or through showers;

How merry you and I have been

Among the meadow flowers.

I never found you cross or tired,

The whole long summer day;

I never knew you leave my side,

Nor yet refused to play.  
There's none of all my schoolfellows  
That love me now like you;  
And I had many a pet before,  
But none that seemed so true.

They brought me in a robin once  
That had a broken wing;  
I nursed him all the winter, but  
He flew away in spring.

The next, it was a lovely squirrel,  
So full of tricks and fun,  
But he left me in the wood one day,  
At the setting of the sun.

You will not leave me too, my lamb;  
But sometimes in my sleep  
I grieve to dream that you have grown  
An old and quiet sheep;  
That only minds the grass all day,  
And never lifts its eyes,  
Like all your friends in yonder field,  
So woolly and so wise.

Thus talked poor Lucy, to her lamb,  
    With arms about it twined,  
Till her good father passed and spoke  
    To her in words so kind:  
"So must my little rosy girl,  
    That now so blithely plays,  
From childhood grow to woman's cares,  
    To woman's works and ways.

"A world of hopes and fears, beyond  
    Her early playmate's lot,  
Awaits my Lucy, when her sports  
    And pets are all forgot.  
Yet may she still its innocence,  
    Her fair example hold,  
And live a meek and guideless lamb  
    In our good Shepherd's fold."

**RICH AND POOR**



Our country house at Christmas time,

It was a pleasant sight,

The holly hung in every room,

The fires ere blazing bright;

As on the snow-clad hills around

Came down the winter night.

My little brother George and I

Stood watching at the door,

To see our uncle's carriage come,

And greet our cousins four;

When a poor hungry boy came near

That only tatters wore.

He told how once his father toiled

But now was with the dead,

That there was sickness in his home

And bitter want of bread.

We gave him all our hoarded pence

For the sad words he said.

But when our cousins came at last

And there was mirth to see,

The gilded gifts and pretty toys

Hung on our Christmas tree;

I told my mother of the boy

And thus she said to me:-

“So much the more we owe to God,

For all that he hath given,

A ready mind to help the hands

That sore with want have striven,

Since they that are the poor on earth

May be the rich in heaven.

**YOUNG AND OLD**



---

Grandfather dear where are they gone

Those boys that were all at school with you,  
Wrestling Richard, jumping John,  
Climbing Harry and hard Hugh;  
We have heard of their doings many a day'  
Grandfather, tell us where are they?

"My boy, it is sixty years ago,  
And all my school mates are dead and gone,  
But the lame old man at the lodge you know,  
'Twas he who was once called jumping John.  
And I whom the east wind pierces through,  
Was the boy for the winters, Hardy Hugh."



## MY FATHER'S HOUSE UPON THE HILL



---

Its white walls glisten through the trees,  
Its windows catch the sunset's glow,  
Its rising smoke the traveller sees  
From the broad river's bank below.  
There's peace around it day and night,  
And love that makes a summer still;  
Through all the year keeps warm and bright  
My father's house upon the hill.

In pinching times the poor come there  
From many a hut and hamlet round;

For ready help, and kindly cheer,  
    Within its doors are always found.  
Our land has halls where plenty flows  
    Has lords, and squires, with wealth at will;  
Best of all the poor man knows  
    My father's house upon the hill.

In week-day work, and Sabbath rest,  
    The passing seasons o'er it glide,  
With many a game, and many a guest,  
    At harvest-home, and Christmas tide.  
Flowers grow without, and smiles within  
    The hearth is never sad or chill;  
Lord keep from grief and save from sin  
    My father's house upon the hill.

WHEN MY MOTHER WAS HERE



---

WE have not grown old, and we have not

Grown cross;

But our days have a chill, and our memories a loss;

The fireside looks lonely, the table looks bare,

Though all sit around with enough and to spare.

My father comes home at the fall of the night;

His step has grown weary, his hair has grown

White;

He smiles on us yet, but his smile has no cheer,

It never was so when my mother was here.

Now no one looks out when we go to school,

Or warns us to keep from the ice on the pool;

And no one comes softly to see how we sleep,

When the night hours are dark, and the silence

Is deep.

Together we go on long summer walk,  
But nobody cheers it with stories and talk;  
We gather the blossoms from bank-land and bough,  
But nobody welcomes us home with them now.  
We read her old Bible; we have not forgot  
The hymns that she loved, and the prayers that  
    She taught;  
Our love is still kindly, our home is still dear,  
But not what they were when my mother was  
    Here.

Compiled and arranged by P. Bonar.

