

**THE VERSE-BOOK OF  
A HOMELY WOMAN**

**By Fay Inchfawn**

**[Elizabeth Rebecca Ward]**

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Dedicated  
TO  
MY FIRST LOVE, MY MOTHER

# **PART I. INDOORS**

## The Long View

Some day of days! Some dawning  
yet to be  
I shall be clothed with immortality!

And, in that day, I shall not greatly care  
That Jane spilt candle grease upon the  
stair.

It will not grieve me then, as once it did,  
That careless hands have chipped my  
teapot lid.

I groan, being burdened. But, in that  
glad day,  
I shall forget vexations of the way.

That needs were often great, when means  
were small,  
Will not perplex me any more at all  
A few short years at most (it may be less),  
I shall have done with earthly storm and  
stress.

So, for this day, I lay me at Thy feet.  
O, keep me sweet, my Master! Keep  
me sweet!

## Within my House

First, there's the entrance, narrow,  
and so small,  
The hat-stand seems to fill the tiny hall;  
That staircase, too, has such an awkward  
bend,  
The carpet rucks, and rises up on end!  
Then, all the rooms are cramped and close  
together;  
And there's a musty smell in rainy weather.  
Yes, and it makes the daily work go hard  
To have the only tap across a yard.  
These creaking doors, these draughts, this  
battered paint,  
Would try, I think, the temper of a saint,  
  
How often had I railed against these  
things,  
With envies, and with bitter murmurings  
For spacious rooms, and sunny garden  
plots!  
Until one day,  
Washing the breakfast dishes, so I think,  
I paused a moment in my work to pray;  
And then and there  
All life seemed suddenly made new and  
fair;  
For, like the Psalmist's dove among the  
pots  
(Those endless pots, that filled the tiny  
sink!),  
My spirit found her wings.  
  
"Lord" (thus I prayed), "it matters not  
at all  
That my poor home is ill-arranged and  
small:  
I, not the house, am straitened; Lord,  
'tis I!  
Enlarge my foolish heart, that by-and-by

I may look up with such a radiant face  
Thou shalt have glory even in this place.  
And when I trip, or stumble unawares  
In carrying water up these awkward stairs,  
Then keep me sweet, and teach me day  
by day  
To tread with patience Thy appointed  
way.  
As for the house . . . . Lord, let it be  
my part  
To walk within it with a perfect heart."



## The Housewife

See, I am cumbered, Lord,  
With serving, and with small vexa-  
tious things.  
Upstairs, and down, my feet  
Must hasten, sure and fleet.  
So weary that I cannot heed Thy word;  
So tired, I cannot now mount up with  
wings.  
I wrestle—how I wrestle!—through the  
hours.  
Nay, not with principalities, nor powers—  
Dark spiritual foes of God's and man's—  
But with antagonistic pots and pans:  
With footmarks in the hall,  
With smears upon the wall,  
With doubtful ears, and small unwashen  
hands,  
And with a babe's innumerable demands.  
I toil with feverish haste, while tear-drops  
glisten,  
(O, child of mine, be still. And listen—  
listen!)

At last, I laid aside  
Important work, no other hands could do  
So well (I thought), no skill contrive so  
true.  
And with my heart's door open—open  
wide—  
With leisured feet, and idle hands, I sat.  
I, foolish, fussy, blind as any bat,  
Sat down to listen, and to learn. And lo,  
My thousand tasks were done the better so.

## To Mother

I would that you should know,  
Dear mother, that I love you—love  
you so!  
That I remember other days and years;  
Remember childish joys and childish fears.  
And this, because my baby's little hand  
Opened my own heart's door and made  
me understand.

I wonder how you could  
Be always kind and good!  
So quick to hear; to tend  
My smallest ills; to lend  
Such sympathising ears  
Swifter than ancient seer's.  
I never yet knew hands so soft and kind,  
Nor any cheek so smooth, nor any mind  
So full of tender thoughts. . . . Dear  
mother, now  
I think that I can guess a little how  
You must have looked for some response,  
some sign,  
That all my tiresome wayward heart was  
thine.

And sure it was! You were my first dear  
love!  
You who first pointed me to God above;  
You who seemed hearkening to my lightest  
word,  
And in the dark night seasons always  
heard  
When I came trembling, knocking at your  
door.  
Forgive me, mother, if my whims outwore  
Your patient heart. Or if in later days  
I sought out foolish unfamiliar ways;  
If ever, mother dear, I loosed my hold  
Of your loved hand; or, headstrong,

thought you cold,  
Forgive me, mother! Oh, forgive me,  
dear!  
I am come back at last—you see me  
here,  
Your loving child. . . . And, mother,  
on my knee  
I pray that thus my child may think of  
me!

## In Such an Hour

Sometimes, when everything goes

wrong:

When days are short, and nights are long;

When wash-day brings so dull a sky

That not a single thing will dry.

And when the kitchen chimney smokes,

And when there's naught so "queer" as

folks!

When friends deplore my faded youth,

And when the baby cuts a tooth.

While John, the baby last but one,

Clings round my skirts till day is done;

When fat, good-tempered Jane is glum,

And butcher's man forgets to come.

Sometimes, I say, on days like these,

I get a sudden gleam of bliss.

"Not on some sunny day of ease,

He'll come . . . but on a day like this!"

And, in the twinkling of an eye,

These tiresome things will all go by!

And, 'tis a curious thing, but Jane

Is sure, just then, to smile again;

Or, out the truant sun will peep,

And both the babies fall asleep.

The fire burns up with roar sublime,

And butcher's man is just in time.

And oh! My feeble faith grows strong

Sometimes, when everything goes wrong!

## The Daily Interview

Such a sensation Sunday's preacher  
made.

"Christian!" he cried, "what is your stock-  
in-trade?

Alas! Too often nil. No time to pray;  
No interview with Christ from day to day,  
A hurried prayer, maybe, just gabbled  
through;

A random text—for any one will do."  
Then gently, lovingly, with look intense,  
He leaned towards us—

"Is this common sense?

No person in his rightful mind will try  
To run his business so, lest by-and-by  
The thing collapses, smirching his good  
name,

And he, insolvent, face the world with  
shame."

I heard it all; and something inly said  
That all was true. The daily toil and press  
Had crowded out my hopes of holiness.  
Still, my old self rose, reasoning:

How can you,

With strenuous work to do—

Real slogging work—say, how can you  
keep pace

With leisured folks? Why, you could  
grow in grace

If you had time . . . the daily Interview  
Was never meant for those who wash and  
bake.

But yet a small Voice whispered:

"For My sake

Keep tryst with Me!

There are so many minutes in a day,  
So spare Me ten.

It shall be proven, then,

Ten minutes set apart can well repay  
You shall accomplish more  
If you will shut your door  
For ten short minutes just to watch and  
pray."

"Lord, if I do  
Set ten apart for You"  
(I dared, yes dared, to reason thus with  
Him)  
"The baker's sure to come;  
Or Jane will call  
To say some visitor is in the hall;  
Or I shall smell the porridge burning, yes,  
And run to stop it in my hastiness.  
There's not ten minutes, Lord, in all the  
day  
I can be sure of peace in which to watch  
and pray."

But all that night,  
With calm insistent might,  
That gentle Voice spake softly, lovingly—  
"Keep tryst with Me!  
You have devised a dozen different ways  
Of getting easy meals on washing days;  
You spend much anxious thought on  
hopeless socks;  
On moving ironmould from tiny frocks;  
'Twas you who found  
A way to make the sugar lumps go round;  
You, who invented ways and means of  
making  
Nice spicy buns for tea, hot from the baking,  
When margarine was short . . . and can-  
not you  
Who made the time to join the butter queue  
Make time again for Me?  
Yes, will you not, with all your daily  
striving,  
Use woman's wit in scheming and con-  
triving  
To keep that tryst with Me?"

Like ice long bound  
On powdered frosty ground,  
My erring will all suddenly gave way.  
The kind soft wind of His sweet pleading  
blew,  
And swiftly, silently, before I knew,  
The warm love loosed and ran.  
Life-giving floods began,  
And so most lovingly I answered Him:  
"Lord, yes, I will, and can.  
I will keep tryst with Thee, Lord, come  
what may!"

ENVOY.

It is a wondrous and surprising thing  
How that ten minutes takes the piercing  
sting  
From vexing circumstance and poison-  
ous dart  
Hurled by the enemy straight at my  
heart.  
So, to the woman tempest-tossed and  
tried  
By household cares, and hosts of things  
beside,  
With all my strength God bids me say  
to you:  
"Dear soul, do try the daily Interview!"

## The Little House

One yestereve, in the waning light,  
When the wind was still and the  
    gloaming bright,  
There came a breath from a far countrie,  
And the ghost of a Little House called  
    to me.

"Have you forgotten me?" "No!" I cried.  
"Your hall was as narrow as this is wide,  
Your roof was leaky, the rain came  
    through  
Till a ceiling fell, on my new frock too!

"In your parlour flooring a loose board hid,  
And wore the carpet, you know it did!  
Your kitchen was small, and the shelves  
    were few,  
While the fireplace smoked—and you  
    know it's true!"

The little ghost sighed: "Do you quite  
    forget  
My window boxes of mignonette?  
And the sunny room where you used to  
    sew  
When a great hope came to you, long ago?"

"Ah, me! How you used to watch the  
    door  
Where a latch-key turned on the stroke  
    of four.  
And you made the tea, and you poured  
    it out  
From an old brown pot with a broken  
    spout

"Now, times have changed. And your  
    footman waits  
With the silver urn, and the fluted plates.  
But the little blind Love with the wings,  
    has flown,



Who used to sit by your warm hearth-  
stone."

The little ghost paused. Then "Away!"  
I said.

"Back to your place with the quiet dead.  
Back to your place, lest my servants see,  
That the ghost of a Little House calls  
to me."

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