

# LOVE-SONGS OF CHILDHOOD

By Eugene Field

To Mrs. Belle Angler

Dearest Aunt:

Many years ago you used to rock me to sleep, cradling me in your arms and singing me petty songs. Surely you have not forgotten that time, and I recall it with tenderness. You were very beautiful then. But you are more beautiful now; for, in the years that have come and gone since then, the joys and the sorrows of maternity have impressed their saintly grace upon the dear face I used to kiss, and have made your gentle heart gentler still.

Beloved lady, in memory of years to be recalled only in thought, and in token of my gratitude and affection, I bring you these little love-songs, and reverently I lay them at your feet.

Eugene Field Chicago, November 1, 1894

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**THE ROCK-A-BY LADY**

*The Rock-a-By Lady from Hushaby street  
Comes stealing; comes creeping;  
The poppies they hang from her head to her feet,  
And each hath a dream that is tiny and fleet—  
She bringeth her poppies to you, my sweet,  
When she findeth you sleeping!*

*There is one little dream of a beautiful drum—  
"Rub-a-dub!" it goeth;  
There is one little dream of a big sugar-plum,  
And lo! thick and fast the other dreams come  
Of popguns that bang, and tin tops that hum,  
And a trumpet that bloweth!*

*And dollies peep out of those wee little dreams  
With laughter and singing;  
And boats go a-floating on silvery streams,  
And the stars peek-a-boo with their own misty gleams,  
And up, up, and up, where the Mother Moon beams,  
The fairies go winging!*

*Would you dream all these dreams that are tiny and  
fleet?*

*They'll come to you sleeping;  
So shut the two eyes that are weary, my sweet,  
For the Rock-a-By Lady from Hushaby street,  
With poppies that hang from her head to her feet,  
Comes stealing; comes creeping.*

## "BOOH!"

On afternoons, when baby boy has had a splendid nap,  
And sits, like any monarch on his throne, in nurse's  
lap,  
In some such wise my handkerchief I hold before my  
face,  
And cautiously and quietly I move about the place;  
Then, with a cry, I suddenly expose my face to view,  
And you should hear him laugh and crow when I say  
"Booh"!

Sometimes the rascal tries to make believe that he is  
scared,  
And really, when I first began, he stared, and  
stared, and stared;  
And then his under lip came out and farther out it  
came,  
Till mamma and the nurse agreed it was a "cruel  
shame"—  
But now what does that same wee, toddling, lisping  
baby do  
But laugh and kick his little heels when I say  
"Booh!"

He laughs and kicks his little heels in rapturous  
glee, and then  
In shrill, despotic treble bids me "do it all aden!"  
And I—of course I do it; for, as his progenitor,  
It is such pretty, pleasant play as this that I am  
for!  
And it is, oh, such fun I am sure that we shall rue  
The time when we are both too old to play the game  
"Booh!"

## GARDEN AND CRADLE

When our babe he goeth walking in his garden,

*Around his tinkling feet the sunbeams play;  
The posies they are good to him,  
And bow them as they should to him,  
As fareth he upon his kingly way;  
And birdlings of the wood to him  
Make music, gentle music, all the day,  
When our babe he goeth walking in his garden.*

*When our babe he goeth swinging in his cradle,  
Then the night it looketh ever sweetly down;  
The little stars are kind to him,  
The moon she hath a mind to him  
And layeth on his head a golden crown;  
And singeth then the wind to him  
A song, the gentle song of Bethlem-town,  
When our babe he goeth swinging in his cradle.*

## **THE NIGHT WIND**

*Have you ever heard the wind go "Yooooo"?  
'T is a pitiful sound to hear!  
It seems to chill you through and through  
With a strange and speechless fear.  
'T is the voice of the night that broods outside  
When folk should be asleep,  
And many and many's the time I've cried  
To the darkness brooding far and wide  
Over the land and the deep:  
"Whom do you want, O lonely night,  
That you wail the long hours through?"  
And the night would say in its ghostly way:  
    "Yooooooooo!  
    Yooooooooo!  
    Yooooooooo!"*

*My mother told me long ago  
(When I was a little tad)  
That when the night went wailing so,  
Somebody had been bad;  
And then, when I was snug in bed,*

*Whither I had been sent,  
With the blankets pulled up round my head,  
I'd think of what my mother'd said,  
And wonder what boy she meant!  
And "Who's been bad to-day?" I'd ask  
Of the wind that hoarsely blew,  
And the voice would say in its meaningful way:  
    "Yooooooooo!  
    Yooooooooo!  
    Yooooooooo!"*

*That this was true I must allow—  
You'll not believe it, though!  
Yes, though I'm quite a model now,  
I was not always so.  
And if you doubt what things I say,  
Suppose you make the test;  
Suppose, when you've been bad some day  
And up to bed are sent away  
From mother and the rest—  
Suppose you ask, "Who has been bad?"  
And then you'll hear what's true;  
For the wind will moan in its ruefulest tone:  
    "Yooooooooo!  
    Yooooooooo!  
    Yooooooooo!"*

## **KISSING TIME**

*'T is when the lark goes soaring  
And the bee is at the bud,  
When lightly dancing zephyrs  
Sing over field and flood;  
When all sweet things in nature  
Seem joyfully achime—  
'T is then I wake my darling,  
For it is kissing time!*

*Go, pretty lark, a-soaring,  
And suck your sweets, O bee;*

*Sing, O ye winds of summer,  
Your songs to mine and me;  
For with your song and rapture  
Cometh the moment when  
It's half-past kissing time  
And time to kiss again!*

*So-so the days go fleeting  
Like golden fancies free,  
And every day that cometh  
Is full of sweets for me;  
And sweetest are those moments  
My darling comes to climb  
Into my lap to mind me  
That it is kissing time.*

*Sometimes, maybe, he wanders  
A heedless, aimless way—  
Sometimes, maybe, he loiters  
In pretty, prattling play;  
But presently bethinks him  
And hastens to me then,  
For it's half-past kissing time  
And time to kiss again!*

## **JEST 'FORE CHRISTMAS**

*Father calls me William, sister calls me Will,  
Mother calls me Willie, but the fellers call me Bill!  
Mighty glad I ain't a girl—ruther be a boy,  
Without them sashes, curls, an' things that's worn by  
Fauntleroy!*

*Love to chawnk green apples an' go swimmin' in the  
lake—*

*Hate to take the castor-ile they give for bellyache!  
'Most all the time, the whole year round, there ain't  
no flies on me,*

*But jest 'fore Christmas I'm as good as I kin be!*

*Got a yeller dog named Sport, sick him on the cat;*



First thing she knows she doesn't know where she is  
at!

Got a clipper sled, an' when us kids goes out to  
slide,

'Long comes the grocery cart, an' we all hook a ride!  
But sometimes when the grocery man is worried an'  
cross,

He reaches at us with his whip, an' larrups up his  
hoss,

An' then I laff an' holler, "Oh, ye never teched me!"  
But jest 'fore Christmas I'm as good as I kin be!

Gran'ma says she hopes that when I git to be a man,  
I'll be a missionarer like her oldest brother, Dan,  
As was et up by the cannibuls that lives in Ceylon's  
Isle,

Where every prospeck pleases, an' only man is vile!  
But gran'ma she has never been to see a Wild West  
show,

Nor read the Life of Daniel Boone, or else I guess  
she'd know

That Buff'lo Bill an' cow-boys is good enough for me!  
Excep' jest 'fore Christmas, when I'm good as I kin  
be!

And then old Sport he hangs around, so solemn-like  
an' still,

His eyes they seem a-sayin': "What's the matter,  
little Bill?"

The old cat sneaks down off her perch an' wonders  
what's become

Of them two enemies of hern that used to make things  
hum!

But I am so perlite an' 'tend so earnestly to biz,  
That mother says to father: "How improved our Willie  
is!"

But father, havin' been a boy hisself, suspicions me  
When, jest 'fore Christmas, I'm as good as I kin be!

For Christmas, with its lots an' lots of candies,  
cakes, an' toys,

Was made, they say, for proper kids an' not for  
naughty boys;

So wash yer face an' bresh yer hair, an' mind yer p's  
and q's,

An' don't bust out yer pantaloons, and don't wear out  
yer shoes;

Say "Yessum" to the ladies, an' "Yessur" to the men,  
An' when they's company, don't pass yer plate for pie  
again;  
But, thinkin' of the things yer'd like to see upon  
that tree,  
Jest 'fore Christmas be as good as yer kin be!

## **BEARD AND BABY**

*I say, as one who never feared  
The wrath of a subscriber's bullet,  
I pity him who has a beard  
But has no little girl to pull it!*

*When wife and I have finished tea,  
Our baby woos me with her prattle,  
And, perching proudly on my knee,  
She gives my petted whiskers battle.*

*With both her hands she tugs away,  
While scolding at me kind o' spiteful;  
You'll not believe me when I say  
I find the torture quite delightful!*

*No other would presume, I ween,  
To trifle with this hirsute wonder,  
Else would I rise in vengeful mien  
And rend his vandal frame asunder!*

*But when her baby fingers pull  
This glossy, sleek, and silky treasure,  
My cup of happiness is full—  
I fairly glow with pride and pleasure!*

*And, sweeter still, through all the day  
I seem to hear her winsome prattle—  
I seem to feel her hands at play,  
As though they gave me sportive battle.*

*Yes, heavenly music seems to steal*

*Where thought of her forever lingers,  
And round my heart I always feel  
The twining of her dimpled fingers!*

## **THE DINKEY BIRD**

*In an ocean, 'way out yonder  
(As all sapient people know),  
Is the land of Wonder-Wander,  
Whither children love to go;  
It's their playing, romping, swinging,  
That give great joy to me  
While the Dinkey-Bird goes singing  
In the amfalula tree!*

*There the gum-drops grow like cherries,  
And taffy's thick as peas—  
Caramels you pick like berries  
When, and where, and how you please;  
Big red sugar-plums are clinging  
To the cliffs beside that sea  
Where the Dinkey-Bird is singing  
In the amfalula tree.*

*So when children shout and scamper  
And make merry all the day,  
When there's naught to put a damper  
To the ardor of their play;  
When I hear their laughter ringing,  
Then I'm sure as sure can be  
That the Dinkey-Bird is singing  
In the amfalula tree.*

*For the Dinkey-Bird's bravuras  
And staccatos are so sweet—  
His roulades, appoggiaturas,  
And robustos so complete,  
That the youth of every nation—  
Be they near or far away—  
Have especial delectation*

*In that gladsome roundelay.*

*Their eyes grow bright and brighter,  
Their lungs begin to crow,  
Their hearts get light and lighter,  
And their cheeks are all aglow;  
For an echo cometh bringing  
The news to all and me,  
That the Dinkey-Bird is singing  
In the amfalula tree.*

*I'm sure you like to go there  
To see your feathered friend—  
And so many goodies grow there  
You would like to comprehend!  
Speed, little dreams, your winging  
To that land across the sea  
Where the Dinkey-Bird is singing  
In the amfalula tree!*

## **THE DRUM**

*I'm a beautiful red, red drum,  
And I train with the soldier boys;  
As up the street we come,  
Wonderful is our noise!  
There's Tom, and Jim, and Phil,  
And Dick, and Nat, and Fred,  
While Widow Cutler's Bill  
And I march on ahead,  
With a r-r-rat-tat-tat  
And a tum-titty-um-tum-tum—  
Oh, there's bushels of fun in that  
For boys with a little red drum!*

*The Injuns came last night  
While the soldiers were abed,  
And they gobbled a Chinese kite  
And off to the woods they fled!  
The woods are the cherry-trees*

*Down in the orchard lot,  
And the soldiers are marching to seize  
The booty the Injuns got.  
With tum-titty-um-tum-tum,  
And r-r-rat-tat-tat,  
When soldiers marching come  
Injuns had better scat!*

*Step up there, little Fred,  
And, Charley, have a mind!  
Jim is as far ahead  
As you two are behind!  
Ready with gun and sword  
Your valorous work to do—  
Yonder the Injun horde  
Are lying in wait for you.  
And their hearts go pitapat  
When they hear the soldiers come  
With a r-r-rat-tat-tat  
And a tum-titty-um-tum-tum!*

*Course it's all in play!  
The skulking Injun crew  
That hustled the kite away  
Are little white boys, like you!  
But "honest" or "just in fun,"  
It is all the same to me;  
And, when the battle is won,  
Home once again march we  
With a r-r-rat-tat-tat  
And tum-titty-um-tum-tum;  
And there's glory enough in that  
For the boys with their little red drum!*

## **THE DEAD BABE**

*Last night, as my dear babe lay dead,  
In agony I knelt and said:  
"O God! what have I done,  
Or in what wise offended Thee,*

*That Thou should'st take away from me  
My little son?*

*"Upon the thousand useless lives,  
Upon the guilt that vaunting thrives,  
Thy wrath were better spent!  
Why should'st Thou take my little son—  
Why should'st Thou vent Thy wrath upon  
This innocent?"*

*Last night, as my dear babe lay dead,  
Before mine eyes the vision spread  
Of things that might have been:  
Licentious riot, cruel strife,  
Forgotten prayers, a wasted life  
Dark red with sin!*

*Then, with sweet music in the air,  
I saw another vision there:  
A Shepherd in whose keep  
A little lamb—my little child!  
Of worldly wisdom undefiled,  
Lay fast asleep!*

*Last night, as my dear babe lay dead,  
In those two messages I read  
A wisdom manifest;  
And though my arms be childless now,  
I am content—to Him I bow  
Who knoweth best.*

## **THE HAPPY HOUSEHOLD**

*It's when the birds go piping and the daylight slowly  
breaks,  
That, clamoring for his dinner, our precious baby  
wakes;  
Then it's sleep no more for baby, and it's sleep no  
more for me,  
For, when he wants his dinner, why it's dinner it*

must be!

And of that lacteal fluid he partakes with great ado,  
While gran'ma laughs,  
And gran'pa laughs,  
And wife, she laughs,  
And I-well, I laugh, too!

You'd think, to see us carrying on about that little  
tad,  
That, like as not, that baby was the first we'd ever  
had;

But, sakes alive! he isn't, yet we people make a fuss  
As if the only baby in the world had come to us!  
And, morning, noon, and night-time, whatever he may  
do,

Gran'ma, she laughs,  
Gran'pa, he laughs,  
Wife, she laughs,  
And I, of course, laugh, too!

But once—a likely spell ago—when that poor little  
chick  
From teething or from some such ill of infancy fell  
sick,  
You wouldn't know us people as the same that went  
about

A-feelin' good all over, just to hear him crow and  
shout;

And, though the doctor poohed our fears and said he'd  
pull him through,

Old gran'ma cried,  
And gran'pa cried,  
And wife, she cried,  
And I—yes, I cried, too!

It makes us all feel good to have a baby on the  
place,

With his everlastin' crowing and his dimpling,  
dumpling face;

The patter of his pinky feet makes music everywhere,  
And when he shakes those fists of his, good-by to  
every care!

No matter what our trouble is, when he begins to coo,  
Old gran'ma laughs,  
And gran'pa laughs,  
Wife, she laughs,  
And I—you bet, I laugh, too!

# SO, SO, ROCK-A-BY SO!

*So, so, rock-a-by so!  
Off to the garden where dreamikins grow;  
And here is a kiss on your winkyblink eyes,  
And here is a kiss on your dimpledown cheek  
And here is a kiss for the treasure that lies  
In the beautiful garden way up in the skies  
Which you seek.  
Now mind these three kisses wherever you go—  
So, so, rock-a-by so!*

*There's one little fumfay who lives there, I know,  
For he dances all night where the dreamikins grow;  
I send him this kiss on your droopydrop eyes,  
I send him this kiss on your rosyred cheek.  
And here is a kiss for the dream that shall rise  
When the fumfay shall dance in those far-away skies  
Which you seek.  
Be sure that you pay those three kisses you owe—  
So, so, rock-a-by so!*

*And, by-low, as you rock-a-by go,  
Don't forget mother who loveth you so!  
And here is her kiss on your weepydeep eyes,  
And here is her kiss on your peachypink cheek,  
And here is her kiss for the dreamland that lies  
Like a babe on the breast of those far-away skies  
Which you seek—  
The blinkywink garden where dreamikins grow—  
So, so, rock-a-by so!*



# THE SONG OF LUDDY-DUD

*A sunbeam comes a-creeping  
Into my dear one's nest,  
And sings to our babe a-sleeping  
The song that I love the best:  
'T is little Luddy-Dud in the morning-  
'T is little Luddy-Dud at night;  
And all day long  
'T is the same sweet song  
Of that waddling, toddling, coddling little mite,  
Luddy-Dud."*

*The bird to the tossing clover,  
The bee to the swaying bud,  
Keep singing that sweet song over  
Of wee little Luddy-Dud.  
'T is little Luddy-Dud in the morning-  
'T is little Luddy-Dud at night;  
And all day long  
'T is the same dear song  
Of that growing, crowing, knowing little sprite,  
Luddy-Dud."*

*Luddy-Dud's cradle is swinging  
Where softly the night winds blow,  
And Luddy-Dud's mother is singing  
A song that is sweet and low:  
'T is little Luddy-Dud in the morning-  
'T is little Luddy-Dud at night;  
And all day long  
'T is the same sweet song  
Of my nearest and my dearest heart's delight,  
Luddy-Dud!"*

# THE DUEL

*The gingham dog and the calico cat*

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