

able to take care of himself. Is it not so, Francis?

FRANK. It is, your worship.

SQUIRE. Then, gentlemen, having attended to the breaking of the seal, according to law, you are released from any further trouble about the business.

XXIV.

The English Sky-Lark.

Take it all in all, no bird in either hemisphere equals the English lark in heart or voice, for both unite to make it the sweetest, the happiest, the welcomest singer that was ever winged, like the high angels of God's love. It is the living ecstasy of joy when it mounts up into its "glorious privacy of light."

On the earth it is timid, silent, and bashful, as if not at home, and not sure of its right to be there at all. It is rather homely withal, having nothing in feather, feature or form to attract notice. It is seemingly made to be

heard, not seen, reversing the old axiom addressed to children when getting noisy.

Its mission is music, and it floods a thousand acres of the blue sky with it several times a day. Out of that palpitating speck of living joy there wells forth a sea of twittering ecstasy upon the morning and evening air. It does not ascend by gyrations, like the eagle and birds of prey. It mounts up like a human aspiration.

It seems to spread its wings and to be lifted straight upwards out of sight by the afflatus of its own happy heart. To pour out this in undulating rivulets of rhapsody, is apparently the only motive of its ascension. This it is that has made it so loved of all generations.

It is the singing angel of man's nearest heaven, whose vital breath is music. Its sweet warbling is only the metrical palpitation of its life of joy. It goes up over the roof-trees of the rural hamlet on the wings of its song, as if to train the human soul to trial flights heavenward.

Never did the Creator put a voice of such volume into so small a living thing. It is a marvel—almost a miracle. In a still hour you

can hear it at nearly a mile's distance. When its form is lost in the hazy lace-work of the sun's rays above, it pours down upon you all the thrilling semitones of its song as distinctly as if it were warbling to you in your window.

XXV.

Rock me to Sleep.

Backward, turn backward, O Time, in your flight,
Make me a child again just for to-night!
Mother, Come back from the echoless shore,
Take me again to your heart as of yore;
Kiss from my forehead the furrows of care.
Smooth the few silver threads out of my hair;
Over my slumbers your loving watch keep;
Rock me to sleep, Mother,—rock me to sleep!

Backward, flow backward. O tide of the years!
I am so weary of toil and of tears;
Toil without recompense, tears all in vain;
Take them, and give me my childhood again!
I have grown weary of dust and decay,—
Weary of flinging my soul-wealth away;

Weary of sowing for others to reap;—
Rock me to sleep, Mother,—rock me to sleep!

Tired of the hollow, the base, the untrue,
Mother, Oh, Mother! My heart calls for you!
Many a summer the grass has grown green,
Blossomed and faded, our faces between,
Yet with strong yearning and passionate pain,
Long I to night for your presence again.
Come from the silence so long and so deep;—
Rock me to sleep, Mother—rock me to sleep!

Over my heart in the days that are flown,
No love like mother-love ever has shone;
No other worship abides and endures,
Faithful, unselfish, and patient like yours:
None like a mother can charm away pain
From the sick soul, and the world-weary brain.
Slumber's soft calms o'er my heavy lids creep;—
Rock me to sleep, Mother.—rock me to sleep!

Come, let your brown hair, just lighted with gold,
Fall on your shoulders again, as of old,
Let it drop over my forehead to-night,
Shading my faint eyes away from the light,
For with its sunny edged shadows once more,
Haply will throng the sweet visions of yore;
Lovingly, softly, its bright billows sweep;—
Rock me to sleep, Mother,—rock me to sleep!

Mother, dear Mother, the years have been long
Since I last listened your lullaby song;

Sing, then, and unto my soul it shall seem
 That manhood's years have been only a dream;
 Clasped to your heart in a loving embrace,
 With your light lashes just sweeping my face,
 Never hereafter to wake or to weep;—
 Rock me to sleep, Mother,—rock me to sleep!

XXVI.

Sunrise.

The rising of the sun was noble in the cold and warmth of it; peeping down the spread of light, he raised his shoulder heavily over the edge of gray mountain and wavering length of upland. Beneath his gaze the dew-fogs dipped, and crept to the hollow places; then stole away in line and column, holding skirts, and clinging subtly at the sheltering corners, where rock hung over grass-land; while the brave lines of the hills came forth, one beyond other gliding.

Then the woods arose in folds, like drapery of awakened mountains, stately with a depth of awe, and memory of the tempests. Autumn's

mellow hand was on them, as they owned already, touched with gold, and red, and olive; and their joy toward the sun was less to a bridegroom than a father.

Yet before the floating impress of the woods could clear itself, suddenly the gladsome light leaped over hill and valley, casting amber, blue and purple, and a tint of rich red rose, according to the scene they lighted on; and the curtain flung around; yet all alike dispelling fear and the cloven hoof of darkness, all on the wings of hope advancing, and proclaiming "God is here!" Then life and joy sprung reassured from every crouching hollow; every flower, and bud, and bird had a fluttering sense of them; and all the flashing of God's gaze merged into soft beneficence.

So perhaps shall break upon us that eternal morning, when crag and chasm shall be no more, neither happiness, envy glory; but all things shall arise and shine in the light of a Father's countenance, because itself is risen.

