

# FREEMAN MARY WILKINS

ONCE UPON A TIME AND  
OTHER CHILD-VERSES

Mary Freeman

**Once Upon a Time and  
Other Child-Verses**

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# **Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman**

## **Once Upon a Time and Other Child-Verses**

### **PREFACE**

TRUSTING to the sweet charity of little folk  
To find some grace, in spite of halting rhyme  
And frequent telling, in these little tales,  
I say again: – Now, once upon a time!

## ONCE UPON A TIME

NOW, once upon a time, a nest of fairies  
Was in a meadow 'neath a wild rose-  
tree;  
And, once upon a time, the violets clustered  
So thick around it one could scarcely see;  
And, once upon a time, a troop of children  
Came dancing by upon the flowery ground;  
And, once upon a time, the nest of fairies,  
With shouts of joy and wonderment they  
found;  
And, once upon a time, the fairies fluttered  
On purple winglets, shimmering in the sun;  
And, once upon a time, the nest forsaking,  
They flew off thro' the violets, every one;  
And, once upon a time, the children followed  
With loud halloos along the meadow green;  
And, once upon a time, the fairies vanished,  
And never more could one of them be seen;  
And, once upon a time, the children sought  
them  
For many a day, but fruitless was their quest,  
For, once upon a time, amid the violets,  
They only found the fairies' empty nest.

## THE SICK FAIRY

BREW some tea o' cowslips, make some  
poppy-gruel,  
Serve it in a buttercup – ah, 'tis very cruel,  
That she is so ailing, pretty Violetta!  
Locust, stop your violin, till she's feeling better.

## THE ENCHANTED TALE OF BANBURY CROSS

*"Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross,  
To see an old woman jump on a white horse;  
With rings on her fingers and bells on her toes,  
She shall make music wherever she goes."*  
– Old Nursery Rhyme.

PRAY show the way to Banbury Cross,"  
*Silver bells are ringing ;*  
"To find the place I'm at a loss,"  
*Silver bells are ringing.*  
"Pass six tall hollyhocks red and white;  
Then, turn the corner toward the right,  
Pass four white roses; turn once more,  
Go by a bed of gilly-flower,  
And one of primrose; turn again  
Where, glittering with silver rain,  
There is a violet-bank; then pass  
A meadow green with velvet grass,

Where lovely lights and shadows play,  
And white lambs frolic all the day,  
Where blooming trees their branches toss —  
Then will you come to Banbury Cross."

The white horse arched his slender neck,  
*Silver bells are ringing;*  
Snow-white he was without a speck,  
*Silver bells are ringing.*  
An old wife held his bridle-rein,  
(The king was there with all his train),  
Her gray hair fluttered in the wind,  
Her gaze turned inward on her mind;  
And not one face seemed she to see  
In all that goodly company.  
Gems sparkled on her withered hands;  
Her ankles gleamed with silver bands  
On which sweet silver bells were hung,  
And always, when she stirred, they rung.

The white horse waited for the start,  
Silver bells are ringing;

Before him leapt his fiery heart,  
*Silver bells are ringing.*  
Up on his back the old wife sprung,



Her silver bells, how sweet  
they rung!  
She gave her milk-white  
steed the rein,  
And round they swept,  
and round again.  
A merry sight it was  
to see,  
And the silver bells  
The Old Wife.

rang lustily.  
The gallant horse with gold was shod;  
So fleetly leapt he o'er the sod,  
He passed the king before he knew,  
And past his flying shadow flew.

A pretty sight it was, forsooth,  
*Silver bells are ringing;*  
For dame and children, maid and youth,  
*Silver bells are ringing.*  
The princess laughed out with delight,  
And clapped her hands, so lily-white —  
The darling princess, sweet was she  
As any flowering hawthorn-tree.  
She stood beside her sire, the king,  
And heard the silvery music ring,  
And watched the white horse, o'er the  
Sweep round, and round, and round again  
Until the old wife slacked his pace  
Before the princess' wondering face,

Then snatched her up before they knew,  
*Silver bells are ringing;*  
And with her from their vision flew,  
*Silver bells are ringing.*  
The nobles to their saddles spring  
And follow, headed by the king!  
But, when they reach it, it is gone  
The white dew falls, the sun is set,  
And no trace of the princess yet.  
They gallop over meadows green;  
They leap the bars that lie between;

Thro' the cool woodland ride they now,  
'Neath rustling branches, bending low;  
The silver music draws them  
Along the beams of moonlight pale,  
*Silver bells are ringing;*

In violet shadows in the vale,  
*Silver bells are ringing.*  
"Return with us, oh, gracious king!

This search is but a bootless thing.  
A spell is laid upon our minds,  
Our thoughts are tossed as by the winds,  
And deeper o'er our senses swells  
The music of those silver bells!  
Return, oh, king, ere 'tis  
late;  
The Wise Man by the  
palace gate  
Will give to thee his  
kindly aid,  
So shalt thou find the  
royal maid."

They galloped back o'er hill and dale,  
*Silver bells are ringing;*  
In soft gusts came the southern gale,  
*Silver bells are ringing.*  
The trembling king knelt down before  
The Wise Man at the palace-door:  
"Oh, Wise Man! art thou truly wise —  
Find out my child with thy bright eyes!"  
"Thy daughter clings to carven stone,  
White dove-wings from her shoulders  
grown;  
In downy dove-plumes is she drest;  
They shine like jewels on her breast;  
She sits beneath the minster eaves,  
Amongst the clustering ivy leaves."

"She was so full of angel-love,"  
*Silver bells are ringing;*  
"They could but make her a white dove,"  
*Silver bells are ringing.*  
The king stood 'neath the minster wall,  
And loudly on his child did call.  
A snow-white dove beneath the eaves,  
Looked down from 'mongst the ivy leaves,  
Then flew down to the monarch's breast,  
And, sorely panting, there did rest.  
Then spake the Wise Man by his side:  
"Oh, king, canst thou subdue thy pride,  
And hang thy crown beneath the eaves,  
Amongst the clustering ivy leaves  
"In thine unhappy daughter's place?"  
*Silver bells are ringing;*

"For thus she'll find her maiden grace,"  
*Silver bells are ringing.*  
The jewels in the royal  
crown,  
Out from the dark  
green ivy shone!  
The white dove softly  
folds her wings,  
Then lightly to the ground  
she springs —  
A princess, sweeter than before,  
For being a white dove an hour.  
They went home through the happy town,  
The king forgot his royal crown,  
And soon, beneath the minster eaves,  
'Twas hidden by the ivy leaves.

## A-BERRYING

NOW Susan Jane a-berrying goes,  
With her dipper and pail a-berry-  
ing goes —  
Now Susan Jane creeps dolefully home, and  
mournfully hangs her head;  
For she tumbled down and bumped her  
nose,  
She tore her frock and she stubbed her toes,  
And the blueberries all were green, alas! and  
the blackberries all were red!

## TWO MOODS

MEADOWS shadowy and sunny,  
Pink with clover, sweet with honey,  
Green with grass that shakes and swings,  
Rustling 'till it almost sings,  
From her open window show  
For a pleasant mile or so.  
She with earnest, pensive look,  
Bending o'er an open book,  
Her own happy self forgets  
Following a story-child's  
Pretty pleasures and regrets.  
Straightening up her golden head,  
Now she sees the fields instead,  
Where the grass and clover stir,  
And her glad self and her day  
Radiantly come back to her.

## THE THREE MARGERY DAWS

SEE-SAW, see-saw, up and down we gay-  
ly go!  
See-saw, see-saw, such a lovely teeter, O!  
See-saw, see-saw,  
grass across a daisy-stalk —

Up and down the robins teetered with their  
silvery talk.  
See-saw, see-saw! robins, they know how to  
play  
See-saw, see-saw, as well as children any day;  
See-saw, see-saw! lads and lassies, don't you  
know,  
Grass across a daisy-stalk makes a lovely  
teeter, O!

## A LITTLE SEAMSTRESS

SHE sat in her little rocking-chair, a-sigh-  
ing and twirling her thumbs:  
"Oh, everything for my doll is done, and  
never to mending comes!  
I haven't a morsel of sewing! – dear mother,  
in all the town,  
Can't you find me one doll, no matter how  
small, who will wear out her gown?"

## THE GOLDEN SLIPPERS

MY lady's ready for the ball;  
But she's lost her golden slippers,  
And the servants scurry all,  
From the pantry, from the hall,  
Brooms in hand, and spoons and dippers.  
Ah, my lady's golden slippers!  
Footman, cook, and housemaid – run!  
Hunt ye nimbly, every one!  
Round they whirl, the lightsome trippers,  
And the music has begun:  
Ah, my lady's golden slippers!

Hurry, hurry; for she yet,  
If ye find her golden slippers,  
May lead off the minuet  
With the Prince of Popinet,  
Foremost of the stately steppers.

Ah, my lady's golden slippers!  
Guess ye where they found them all!  
Dancing bravely at the ball,

Of themselves, these frisky slippers,  
Wheeling at the fiddle's call —  
Ah, my lady's golden slippers!



## THE TITHING-MAN

BONNY sweet-marjoram was in flower,  
The pinks had come with their spices  
sweet;  
Thro' the village sounded the Sabbath-bell,  
And the reverent people flocked down the  
street.

Little Elizabeth, prim and pale,  
A decorous little Puritan maid,  
Walked soberly up the meeting-house hill,  
With a look on her face as if she prayed.

Her catechism was in her hand,  
Unvexed was she by the scholar's art;  
Her simple lesson she simply learned,  
And loved the Father with all her heart.

Her little kerchief was white as snow,  
Like a rose she looked in her Sunday gown

As she soberly climbed the meeting-house  
hill,  
With her pretty eyes cast meekly down.

Little Elizabeth sat alone  
In the queer old-fashioned oaken pew,  
And earnestly on the parson bent  
Her modest, innocent eyes of blue.

But, ah! the sermon was deep and long,  
The parson spoke with a weary drone;  
And she heard the honey-bees out of doors  
Hum, in a drowsy monotone;

The very wind had a sleepy sound —  
Little Elizabeth began to nod,  
Though she told herself 'twas a dreadful thing  
To fall asleep in the house of God.

"My fourthly is," the parson droned; —  
"I pray the Lord my soul to keep,"  
Mused little Elizabeth in a maze —  
And then – ah me! she fell asleep.

The tithing-man crept down the aisle

In solemn state, with his awful rod,  
To chide the folk in the meeting-house  
Who dared to whisper, or smile, or nod.

Little Elizabeth soundly slept,  
All by herself, in the oaken pew,  
With the heavy gold-fringed eyelids drooped  
Over her innocent eyes of blue.

Close to her tiptoed the tithing-man,  
And over her reached his awful rod,  
And poked the little Puritan maid  
For falling asleep in the house of God.

Dear little Elizabeth, prim and pale!  
How her poor heart jumped when she  
woke and found  
The dreaded tithing-man at her side,  
And the queer poke-bonnets all turning  
round!

Then she sat straight up in the old oak pew,  
Grave and pale as a lily-flower;  
But she thought the people all looked at her,  
While all their eyes did lower and glower;

And, going home, she fancied the birds  
Called back and forth, with a knowing nod:  
"There's the little maid whom the tithing-  
man  
Caught fast asleep in the house of God."

## **THE BARLEY-CANDY BOY**

O THE Barley-Candy Boy! O the Bar-  
ley-Candy Boy!  
Who lived in the toy-man's window, 'tis little  
he had of joy!  
For he could not eat a bit of sweet, nor any  
sugar at all,  
Unless he ran a fearful risk of being a can-  
nibal.

## DOWN IN THE CLOVER

( A Duet, with Sheep Obligato.)

MID feeding lambs and springing grass  
There sat a little lad and lass,  
A green umbrella overhead,  
The flickering shade of boughs instead,  
And read a book of fairy rhyme,  
All in their gay vacation time.

Quoth he: "The dearest, queerest story  
Was that one of the fairy prince,  
Who sailed down stream in his pearl dory,  
Neath boughs of rose and flowering quince,  
To save the lovely princess whom  
The wicked, white-haired, old witch-lady  
Kept in a tower of awful gloom,  
Deep in a magic forest shady:

How proud he tossed his plumèd head  
Before the witch's door, and said " —

Sheep: Ba-a, ba-a! Honey-sweet the clover's  
blowing  
Ba-a, ba-a! Juicy-green the grass is  
growing.  
"I think," quoth she, "there's one that's  
better:  
About that little fairy girl,  
Who bound the ogre with a fetter  
Of spiderwort and grass and pearl;  
Then singing in the gateway sat,  
Till up the road the prince came prancing,  
A jewelled feather in his hat,  
And set the cherry-boughs a-dancing.  
How low he bent his handsome head  
Before the fairy girl, and said " —

Sheep: Ba-a, ba-a! Who the day so sweetly  
passes  
As a lamb who never stops,  
But from dawn to twilight crops  
Clover-heads and dewy grasses?

"Well, by and by I think I'll be  
A fairy prince as brave as he:  
I'll wind a silver bugle clear,  
Low and dim you'll hear it, dear;  
A sword with jewelled hilt I'll bear,  
A cap and heron-plume I'll wear,

And I will rescue you," quoth  
he.

"Fast to the witch's tower I'll  
And beat upon the gate, and  
cry

Sheep: Ba-a, ba-a! Sweet the  
simple life we're leading,  
In the sweet green pasture  
feeding!

Then quoth the little reader  
fair.

"I've changed my mind, for I don't dare  
To stay there in the witch's tower;  
I'll be the dame who found a flower  
Of gold and rubies – in the tale —  
And sold it for a fairy veil,

Which made her look so sweet and true  
That she was dearly loved; then you " —  
Sheep: Ba-a, ba-a! Turn the juicy morsel over.  
Who would be a lad or lass,  
If he could his summer pass  
As the sheep amongst the clover?  
Grasshoppers on daisies teeter,  
Dew-drops clovers sweeten sweeter.  
Who can care for stupid tales,  
Fairy horns and f airy veils,  
Fairy princess, fairy prince?  
Yet we must not blame them, since  
( Turn the juicy morsel over)  
They cannot be sheep in clover.

# THE BALLAD OF THE BLACK-SMITH'S SONS

## I

CLING, clang, – "Whoa, my bonny gray  
mare!  
Whoa," – cling, clang, – "my bay!  
But the black and the sorrel must stay unshod,  
While my two fair sons are away."

## II

While the blacksmith spake, his fair sons  
came,  
And stood in the smithy door —  
"Now where have ye been, my two fair sons,  
For your father has missed ye sore? "

## III

Then pleasantly spake the younger son,  
With the eyes of dreamy blue:  
"O Father, we've been in a land as bright  
As the glint o' the morning dew! "

## IV

Then his brother twinkled his gay black eyes,  
And he spake up merry and bold:  
"Hey, Father, we've been in the fairy land,  
Where the horses are shod wi' gold!"

## V

"An' what did ye there in Fairyland,  
O my two fair sons, I pray?"

"We shod for them, Father, their fairy steeds,  
All in a month an' a day.

## VI

"An', Father, we shod them wi' virgin gold;  
Each nail had a diamond head;  
All the steeds were as white as the clear moon-  
light,  
An' in fields o' lilies they fed."  
"An' what was the sum o' the fairy hire,  
O my two fair sons, I pray?"

"A seed of a wonderful fairy flower,  
They gave to us each for pay! "

## VIII

"An' what will ye do wi' the seeds, fair  
sons?"  
"We will sow i' the light, green spring,  
An' maybe a golden rose will toss,  
Or a silver lily will swing."

## IX

"Now," – cling, clang, – "whoa, my bonny  
gray mare!  
Whoa," – cling, clang, – "my bay!  
An' the sorrel an' black, now my sons are  
back,  
Can be shod " – cling, clang, – "to-day."

## X

Oh! the smith's sons planted the fairy seeds  
When the light, green spring came round,  
Through the sunlit hours, 'twixt the April  
showers,  
In the best of the garden ground.

## XI

Then the white rains wove with the long  
light-beams,  
Till a stalk, like a slim green flame,  
Pierced the garden mould: a leaf unrolled;  
And another beside it came.

## XII

Then the brothers tended their fairy plants  
Till they shot up brave and tall,  
And the leaves grew thick. "Now soon shall  
we pick  
A rose like a golden ball;

## XIII

"Or else we shall see a lily, maybe,  
With a bell o' bright silver cast,"  
They thought; and they cried with joy and  
When the blossom-buds shaped at last.

## XIV

"Now, heyday!" shouted the elder son,  
And he danced in the garden walk,  
"A hat I will buy, as a steeple high,  
An' the neighbors will stare an' talk.

## XV

"Heyday! I will buy me a brave gold chain,  
An' a waistcoat o' satin fine,  
A ruff o' lace, an' a pony an' chaise,  
An' a bottle o' red old wine!"



## XVI

But his brother looked up in the blue spring  
sky,  
And his yellow curls shone in the sun —  
"O joy! If I hold but my fairy gold,  
My father's toil is done!

## XVII

"He shall hammer no more with his tired  
old hands,  
He shall shoe not the bay nor the gray;  
But shall live as he please, an' sit at his ease,  
A-resting the livelong day."

## XVIII

Alas, and alas! When it came to pass  
That the bud to a flower was grown,  
It was pallid and green, — no blossom so mean  
In the country side was known.

## XIX

Then angrily hurried the elder son,  
And hustled his up by the root;  
And it gave out a sound, as it left the ground,  
Like the shriek of a fairy flute.

## XX

But he flung it over the garden wall;  
And he cried, with a scowling brow:  
"No waistcoat fine, an' no bottle o' wine —  
I have labored for naught, I trow! "

## XXI

"Now," – cling, clang, – "whoa, my bonny  
gray mare!  
Cling, clang, – "whoa, my bay!  
But the sorrel an' white must wait to-night,  
For one son sulks all day."

## XXII

But the blue-eyed son till the summer was  
done  
Cared well for his fairy-flower;  
He weeded and watered, and killed the  
grub  
Would its delicate leaves devour.

## XXIII

Then forth to his garden he went one day,  
And the fairy plant was dead;  
The leaves were black in the white frost-  
light,  
And the stalk was a shrivelled shred.

## XXIV

"Now, never a rose like a golden ball,  
Nor a silver lily shall blow;  
But never I'll mind, for I'm sure to find  
More gold, if I work, I know."

## XXV

Then he tenderly pulled up the fairy plant,  
And lo, in the frosty mould,  
Like a star from the skies to his dazzled eyes,  
Was blazing a bulb of gold!

## XXVI

"Now," – cling, clang, – "whoa, my bonny  
gray mare!  
Or gallop or trot, as ye may!  
This happy old smith will shoe ye no more,  
For he sits at his ease, all day! "

## A VALENTINE FOR BABY

*The rose is red, the violet's blue,  
Pinks are pretty, and so are you."*

THE rose is red, my rosy dear;  
But that you as yet hardly know,  
Since you have only been with us  
Four of the times when roses blow.

The violet's blue, my blue-eyed love;  
Yet that, perhaps, you hardly knew,  
Since you have only four times passed  
The violets in their hoods of blue.

The pinks are pretty, baby queen,  
And so are you; but that, also,  
From being here so short a time,  
Perhaps you've hardly learned to know.

# THE FAIRY FLAG

## A Skye Folk-lore Story

BEYOND the purple gloom of moors,  
Beyond the blueness of the sea,  
Beyond the range of chalk-white cliffs,  
The sun was setting peacefully.

The fairy, on a grassy knoll,  
Sat dreaming, singing to the cows:  
"Knee-deep in clumps of plummy ferns,  
Knee-deep in rustling grasses browse!

"The chieftain slays his foeman's clan,  
The lady broiders in the hall;  
I sit here singing to the cows,  
And am the gayest one of all!

"Now of the clumps of spicy fern,  
Now of the juicy grasses taste!"  
The fairy wore a grass-green gown,  
With golden girdle at her waist;

Her winsome little face upturned,  
Her soft gold hair all round her streamed;  
Her small pink cheeks like roses burned,  
Her wild blue eyes like jewels beamed.

She struck a little harp o' pearl,  
As to the browsing kine she sung:  
All lightly o'er the fairy bridge  
Beyond, a bonnie laddie sprung.

He had Prince Charlie's yellow locks,  
His gay blue eyes and lovesome way:  
Son of the great Macleod was he —  
The castle just beyond him lay.

The fairy lilted loud and sweet,  
The laddie turned him round to see;  
She lifted up her little face,  
And sweet, and sweet, and sweet, smiled she.

The laddie thro' the heather  
ran,  
His tartan blowing out behind,  
The little fairy, gowned in green,  
Wi' little harp o' pearl, to find.

And since you are a mortal bairn,  
And yet have shunned me not," she said,  
A fairy gift I'll give to thee,  
To-morrow, when the west is red.

"And since you have a bonny face,  
I'll give to thee a fairy kiss,  
To take the bitter from thy woe,  
And add a sweetness to thy bliss."

She kissed the laddie's blushing cheek,  
And all the air grew sweet around,  
As if a million flowers bloomed out —  
And then she vanished from the ground.

The western sky all roses was,  
And round the "Macleod's Maidens" feet  
Foam-wreaths to wreaths of roses turned.  
The fairy lilted loud and sweet;

The laddie o'er the fairy bridge,  
Came running lightly to her side:  
"And have you brought the fairy gift  
You promised me last night?" he cried.

The flag was green as springtide sward  
What time the sun upon it lies,  
And shot with threads of glittering gold,  
And filled with spots of gold, like eyes.

She put it in the laddie's hand:  
"Once waved, 'twill bring thee thy desire,  
And twice, and thrice – but not again;  
Then cast it, worthless, in the fire!"

A shadow o'er her gown o' green,  
A shadow o'er her winsome face,  
A shadow o'er her golden hair,  
Came softly creeping on apace.

The fairy through the shadow shone,  
And struck her little harp o' pearl;  
Then vanished in the shadow's heart,

Wi' golden and wi' rosy swirl.

The laddie held the fairy flag,  
Alone in twilight gray and cold;  
And stood and looked, his wond'ring eyes  
All filled with dancing motes of gold.

The laddie's yellow beard had grown;  
He'd wedded with a lady fair;

And he had got a little son,  
With his same bonnie yellow hair.

And alway had the fairy's kiss,  
She gave to him so long ago,  
Added a sweetness to his bliss,  
And ta'en the bitter from his woe.

But never yet the fairy flag  
Had waved upon the castle wall;  
For with his stalwart arm and sword,  
His troubles he had breasted all.

"Oh, where's my little laddie gone?"  
The lady left her 'broidery frame;  
Through every castle window peered,  
With tearful eyes, the gentle dame.

Then Macleod called his followers out,  
And loud the castle trumpets blew:  
"Oh, Macleod's heir is strayed awa',  
And on the heather falls the dew,

"And on the heather falls the dew;  
Shadows are floating o'er the sea.

Oh, where's my little laddie gone:  
I pray ye bring him back to me!

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

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