

**ЭДИТ НЕСБИТ**

THE RAINBOW

AND THE ROSE

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**The Rainbow and the Rose**

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**Несбит Э.**

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# E. Nesbit

## The Rainbow and the Rose

### I

#### THE THINGS THAT MATTER

NOW that I've nearly done my days,  
And grown too stiff to sweep or sew,  
I sit and think, till I'm amaze,  
About what lots of things I know:  
Things as I've found out one by one—  
And when I'm fast down in the clay,  
My knowing things and how they're done  
Will all be lost and thrown away.

There's things, I know, as won't be lost,  
Things as folks write and talk about:  
The way to keep your roots from frost,  
And how to get your ink spots out.  
What medicine's good for sores and sprains,  
What way to salt your butter down,  
What charms will cure your different pains,  
And what will bright your faded gown.

But more important things than these,  
They can't be written in a book:  
How fast to boil your greens and peas,  
And how good bacon ought to look;  
The feel of real good wearing stuff,  
The kind of apple as will keep,  
The look of bread that's rose enough,  
And how to get a child asleep.

Whether the jam is fit to pot,  
Whether the milk is going to turn,  
Whether a hen will lay or not,  
Is things as some folks never learn.  
I know the weather by the sky,  
I know what herbs grow in what lane;  
And if sick men are going to die,  
Or if they'll get about again.

Young wives come in, a-smiling, grave,  
With secrets that they itch to tell:

I know what sort of times they'll have,  
And if they'll have a boy or gell.  
And if a lad is ill to bind,  
Or some young maid is hard to lead,  
I know when you should speak 'em kind,  
And when it's scolding as they need.

I used to know where birds ud set,  
And likely spots for trout or hare,  
And God may want me to forget  
The way to set a line or snare;  
But not the way to truss a chick,  
To fry a fish, or baste a roast,  
Nor how to tell, when folks are sick,  
What kind of herb will ease them most!

Forgetting seems such silly waste!  
I know so many little things,  
And now the Angels will make haste  
To dust it all away with wings!  
O God, you made me like to know,  
You kept the things straight in my head,  
Please God, if you can make it so,  
Let me know something when I'm dead.

## THE CONFESSION

I HAVEN'T always acted good:  
I've taken things not meant for me;  
Not other people's drink and food,  
But things they never seemed to see.  
I haven't done the way I ought  
If all they say in church is true,  
But all I've had I've fairly bought,  
And paid for pretty heavy too.

For days and weeks are very long  
If you get nothing new and bright,  
And if you never do no wrong  
Somehow you never do no right.  
The chap that daresent go a yard  
For fear the path should lead astray  
May be a saint—though that seems hard,  
But he's no traveller, any way.

Some things I can't be sorry for,  
The things that silly people hate:

But some I did I do deplore,  
I knew, inside, they wasn't straight.  
And when my last account is filed,  
And stuck-up angels stop their song,  
I'll ask God's pardon like a child  
For what I really knew was wrong.

If you've a child, you'd rather see  
A bit of temper, off and on,  
A greedy grab, a silly spree—  
And then a brave thing said or done  
Than hear your boy whine all day long  
About the things he musn't do:  
Just doing nothing, right or wrong:  
And God may feel the same as you.

For God's our Father, so they say,  
He made His laws and He made me;  
He'll understand about the way  
Me and His laws could not agree.  
He might say, "You're worth more, My son,  
Than all My laws since law began.  
Take good with bad—here's something done—  
And I'm your God, and you're My man."

## WORK

WHEN I am busying about,  
Sewing on buttons, tapes, and strings,  
Hanging the week's wet washing out  
Or ironing the children's things,  
Sweeping and dusting, cleaning grates,  
Scrubbing the dresser or the floors,  
Washing the greasy dinner plates,  
Scouring the brasses on the doors—

I wonder what it's all about,  
And when did people first begin  
To keep the dirt and wornness out  
And keep the wholesome comfort in:  
How long it is since women bore  
This round of wash and make and mend,  
And what God makes us do it for  
And whether it will ever end!

When God began to do His work  
He made a new thing every day—

Even now He is not one to shirk,  
But makes things, always some new way  
He made the earth, and sky, and sun,  
The creatures of the sea and wood,  
And when his first week's work was done  
He saw that it was very good.

But He—for all He worked so fast  
To finish air, and wave, and shore,  
Knew that this work of His would last  
For ever and for evermore.  
On Saturday night He was content,  
He knew that Monday would not bring  
Need for another firmament,  
Another set of everything.

But though my work is easier far  
Than making sky and sea and sun,  
It's harder than God's labours are,  
Because my work is never done.  
I sweep and churn, save and contrive,  
I bake and brew, I don't complain,  
But every Monday morning I've  
Last Monday's work to do again.

I'm good at work—I work away;  
Always the same my work must go;  
The flowers grow different every day,  
That's why I like to see them grow.  
If, up in Heaven, God understood  
He'd let me for my Paradise  
Make all things new and very good  
And never make the same thing twice!

### **THE JILTED LOVER TO HIS MOTHER**

You needn't pray for me, old lady, I don't want no one's prayer,  
I'm fit and jolly as ever I was—you needn't think I care.  
When I go whistling down the road, when the warm night is falling,  
She needn't think I'm whistling her, it's another girl I'm calling.

If I pass her house a dozen times, or fifty times a day,  
She needn't think I think of her, my work lies out that way.  
If they should tell her I've grown thin (for that is what they've told me)  
This cursed weather counts for that, and not the girl who sold me.

And if they say I'm off my feed I still can tip a can;

If I get drunk what's that to her? I am not her young man.  
I know I've had a lucky let-off—she ain't no class, she ain't,  
For all she looked like a bush o' roses and talked like a story book saint.

I never give a thought to her. Don't worry your old head,  
I've quite forgot her pretty ways and the cruel things she said,  
There's lots of other gals to be had as any chap can see,  
So you cheer up, you've got no call to go and pray for me.  
But all the same, if you want to pray, you'd best pray God take care  
of them,  
For if I catch them two together, by hell! I'll swing for the pair of them.

### THE WILL TO LIVE

SINCE Faith is a veil that has nothing behind it,  
And Hope wanders lost where no mortal can find it,  
Since Love is a mirror we break in a minute  
In snatching the image our soul has cast in it,  
What is the use of the Summers and Springs,  
The wave of the woods and the waft of the wings—  
Since all means nothing, and good things and ill  
Make madness,—a mirage tormenting us still?

Since all the fighting, the ardent endeavour,  
The heart cast bleeding to feed the Ideal,  
Are vain, vain, vain, and the one thing real  
Is that all's vain, for ever and ever;  
Why then, be a man and stand back from the strife,  
Fall by the sword, but keep out of the snare;  
Will but to be—and be willing to bear  
All that the gods may lay on your of life!

In the far East, where light ever dawns first,  
There has man learned how the Fates may be cheated,  
How by our craft may their strength be defeated,  
Though all our best be no match for their worst!  
Kill the desire that they set in your bosom,  
Long not for fruit when you gaze on the blossom,  
Dream not of flowers when you gaze on the bud,  
Kill all the rebels that shout in your blood.  
Sorrow and sickness, disease and decay—  
These toll the hours of Life's desolate day;  
Hopes unfulfilled and forbidden delight  
These are the dreams of Life's treacherous night.  
So let me image an infinite peace  
Touched with no joy but the ease of release.  
Out of the eddies I climb and I cease

Keeping, in change for this man's soul of me,  
Something which, by the eternal decree,  
Is as like Nothing as Something can be!

Not to desire, to admit, to adore,  
Casting the robe of the soul that you wore  
Just as the soul casts the body's robe down.  
This is man's destiny, this is man's crown.  
This is the splendour, the end of the feast;  
This is the light of the Star in the East.

So, Silence reconciles Life's jarring phrases  
Far in the future, austere and august:  
Meanwhile, the buds of the poplars are falling,  
Spring's on the lawn, and a little voice calling:  
"Daddy, come out! Daddy darling, you must!  
Daddy come out and help Molly pick daisies!"  
And, since one's here, and the Spring's in the garden  
(How many lives hence will that thought earn pardon?)  
Since one's a man and man's heart is insistent,  
And, since Nirvana is doubtful and distant,  
Though life's a hard road and thorny to travel—  
Stones in the borders and grass on the gravel,  
Still there's the wisdom that wise men call folly,  
Still one can go and pick daisies with Molly!

### **THE BEATIFIC VISION**

OH God! if I do my duty  
And walk in the thorny way,  
Will you pay me with heavens of beauty,  
Millions of lives away?  
Will you give me the music of heaven,  
And the joy that none understands,  
In place of what life would have given  
If I had held out my hands?

I have lived in a narrow prison,  
I have writhed 'neath a bitter creed,  
And I dare to say that no heaven can pay  
The renounced dream and deed,  
But when my life's portal closes,  
If you have no heaven to spare  
God! give me a garden of roses,  
And some one to walk with there.

## II

### MUMMY WHEAT

LAID close to Death, these many thousand years,  
In this small seed Life hid herself and smiled;  
So well she hid, Death was at least beguiled,  
Set free the grain—and lo! the sevenfold ears!

Warmed by the sun, wooed by the wind's soft word,  
Under blue canopy they hold their state:  
For this, ah, was it not worth while to wait  
Through all the centuries of hope deferred?

What could they know who laid the seed with Death  
Of this Divine fruition fixed and planned?  
Love—since Life parts us—lend my hand your hand  
And look with me into the eyes of faith.

For here between your hand and mine there lies  
A little seed we trust to Death to keep  
Through unimagined centuries of sleep  
Until the day when Life shall bid it rise.

Our harvest waits us. Who knows where or how,  
What worlds away, wrapped in what coil of pain?  
But Life shall bid us pluck gold sevenfold grain  
Grown from the love she bids us bury now.

### THE BEECH TREE

MY beautiful beech, your smooth grey coat is trimmed  
With letters. Once, each stood for all things dear  
To foolish lovers, dead this many a year,  
Whose lamp of lighted love so soon was dimmed.  
You have seen them come and go,  
And heard their kisses and vows  
Under your boughs,  
The pitiful vows they swore,  
Have seen their poor tears flow,  
Have seen them part; to meet, and to return, no more!

And in old winters, through your branches bare,

The north wind drove the blue home-scented smoke  
That on the glowing Christmas hearth awoke  
Where the old logs, with eager flicker and flare,  
Sang their low crackling song  
Of peace and of good will.  
The old song is still,  
The old voices have died away,  
The hearth has been cold so long,  
And the bright faces dimmed and covered up with clay.

And summer after summer wakes to glow  
The ordered pleasance with the clipped box-hedge,  
The drooping lilac by the old moat's edge,  
The roses, that throw you kisses from below,  
The orchard pink and white,  
The sedge's whispered words,  
The nesting birds,  
All these return to revel round your feet.  
And in the untroubled night  
The nightingale still sings, the jasmine still is sweet.

My beautiful beech, I carve upon you here  
The master-letter which begins her name  
Through whom, to me, the royal summer came,  
And nightingale and rose, and all things dear.  
And, in some far-off time,  
I shall come here, weary and old,  
When the hearth in my heart is cold  
And the birds that nest there flown;  
I will remember this summer in all its prime  
And say, "There was a day—  
Thank God, the Giver, an unforgotten day,  
When I walked here, not alone,  
—O God of pity and sorrow, not alone!"

## IN ABSENCE

WAKE, do you wake in the dark in the strange far place,  
Window and door not set like the ones we knew,  
Leaning your face through the dark for another face,  
Stretching your arms to the arms that are far from you,  
Even as I, through the depth of this darkness, do?

Sleep, do you sleep in the house in the lonely land?  
In the lonely room do you hear no steps draw near?  
Do you miss in the darkness the hand that implores your hand,  
See through the darkness your last dream disappear,

And weep, as I weep, in the outer darkness here?

Dream, do you dream? Nay, never a dream will stay,  
Never a phantom is fond, or a vision kind.  
Your dreams elude you and fly through the dark my way,  
My dreams fly forth to you whom they may not find;  
And we in the darkness weep, we weep and are left behind.

### SILENCE

So silent is the world to-night  
The lamp gives silence out like light,  
The latticed windows open wide  
Show silence, like the night, outside:  
The nightingale's faint song draws near  
Like musical silence to mine ear.

The empty house calls not to me,  
"Here, but for fate, were thou and she—"  
Its gibe for once is checked. To-night  
Silence is queen in grief's despite,  
And even the longing of my soul  
Is silent 'neath this hour's control.

### RAISON D'ETRE

O WEARY night, O weary day,  
When heart's delight is far away!

What is the day? A frame of blue  
The vacant-glaring sun grins through.  
What is the night? A sable veil  
Through which the moon peers tired and pale.

O weary day! O weary night!  
How far away is heart's delight!

Love hung the sun in his high place  
To give me light to see her face,  
And love spread out the veil of night  
To hide us two from all men's sight.

O kindly night, O pleasant day,  
Your use is gone—why should ye stay?  
My heart's delight is far away,

O weary night, O weary day.

### **THE ONLOOKER**

If I could make a pillow for your head,  
Soft, pleasant, filled with every pretty thought;  
If I could lay a carpet where you tread  
Of all my life's most radiant fancies wrought,  
And spread my love as canopy above you,  
Your sleep, your steps should know how much I love you.

But—as life goes, to the old sorry tune—  
I stand apart, I see thorns wound your feet,  
Your sleeping eyes resenting sun and moon,  
Your head lie restless on a breast unmeet—  
And say no word, and suffer without moan,  
Lest you should guess how much you are alone.

### **THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE**

I **PLUCKED** the blossoms of delight  
In many a wood and many a field,  
I made a garland fair and bright  
As any gardens yield.

But when I sought the living tree  
To make new earth and Heaven new,  
I found—alas for you and me—  
Its roots were set in you.

Oh, dear my garden, where the fruit  
Of lovely knowledge sweetly springs,  
How jealously you guard the root  
Of all enlightening things!

### **AT PARTING**

**AND** you could leave me now—  
After the first remembered whispered vow  
Which sings for ever and ever in my ears—  
The vow which God among His Angels hears—  
After the long-drawn years,

The slow hard tears,  
Could break new ground, and wake  
A new strange garden to blossom for your sake,  
And leave me here alone,  
In the old garden that was once our own?

How should I learn to bear  
Our garden's pleasant ways and pleasant air,  
Her flowers, her fruits, her lily, her rose and thorn,  
When only in a picture these appear—  
These, once alive, and always over-dear?  
Ah—think again: the rose you used to wear  
Must still be more than other roses be  
The flower of flowers. Ah, pity, pity me!

For in my acres is no plot of ground  
Whereon could any garden site be found,  
I have but little skill  
To water weed and till  
And make the desert blossom like the rose;  
Yet our old garden knows  
If I have loved its ways and walks and kept  
The garden watered, and the pleasance swept.

Yet—if you must—go now:  
Go, with my blessing filling both your hands,  
And, mid the desert sands  
Which life drifts deep round every garden wall,  
Make your new festival  
Of bud and blossom—red rose and green leaf.  
No blight born of my grief  
Shall touch your garden, love; but my heart's prayer  
Shall draw down blessings on you from the air,  
And all we learned of leaf and plant and tree  
Shall serve you when you walk no more with me  
In garden ways; and when with her you tread  
The pleasant ways with blossoms overhead  
And when she asks, "How did you come to know  
The secrets of the ways these green things grow?"  
Then you will answer—and I, please God, hear,  
"I had another garden once, my dear".

## SONG

I HEAR the waves to-night  
Piteously calling, calling  
Though the light

Of the kind moon is falling,  
Like kisses, on the sea  
That calls for sunshine, dear, as my soul calls for thee.

I see the sea lie gray  
Wrinkling her brows in sorrow,  
Hear her say:—  
"Bright love of yesterday, return to-morrow,  
Sun, I am thine, am thine!"  
Oh sea, thy love will come again, but what of mine?

## RENUNCIATION

ROSE of the desert of my heart,  
Moon of the night that is my soul,  
Thou can'st not know how sweet thou art,  
Nor what wild tides thy beams control.

For all thy heart a garden is,  
Thy soul is like a dawn of May.  
And garden and dawn might both be his,  
Who from them both must turn away.

Oh, garden of the Spring's delight!  
Oh, dewy dawn of perfect noon!  
I will not pluck thy roses white  
Or warm thy May-time into June.

I can but bless thee, moon and rose,  
And journey far and very far  
To where the night no moonbeam shows,  
To where no happy roses are!

### III

#### THE VEIL OF MAYA

SWEET, I have loved before. I know  
This longing that invades my days;  
This shape that haunts life's busy ways  
I know since long and long ago.

This starry mystery of delight  
That floats across my eager eyes,  
This pain that makes earth Paradise,  
These magic songs of day and night—

I know them for the things they are:  
A passing pain, a longing fleet,  
A shape that soon I shall not meet,  
A fading dream of veil and star.

Yet, even as my lips proclaim  
The wisdom that the years have lent,  
Your absence is joy's banishment,  
And life's one music is your name.

I love you to my heart's hid core:  
Those other loves? how should one learn  
From marshlights how the great fires burn?  
Ah, no! I never loved before!

#### SONG

THE sunshine of your presence lies  
On the glad garden of my heart  
And bids the leaves of silence part  
To show the flowers to your dear eyes,  
And flower on flower blooms there and dies  
And still new buds awakened spring,  
For sunshine makes the garden wise,  
To know the time for blossoming.

Night is no time for blossoming,  
Your garden then dreams otherwise,  
Of vanished Summer, vanished Spring,

And how the dearest flower first dies.  
Yet from your ministering eyes  
Though night hath drawn me far apart  
On the still garden of my heart  
The moonlight of your memory lies.

### **TO VERA, WHO ASKED A SONG**

IF I only had time!  
I could make you a rhyme.  
But my time is kept flying  
By smiling and sighing  
And living and dying for you.  
The song-seed, I sow it,  
I water and hoe it,  
But never can grow it.  
Ah, traitress, you know it!  
What is a poor poet to do?

Ah, let me take breath!  
I am harried to death  
By the loves and the graces  
That crowd where your face is  
That lurk in your laces and throng.  
Call them off for a minute,  
Once let me begin it  
The devil is in it  
If I can not spin it  
As sweet as a linnet, your song!

### **THE POET TO HIS LOVE**

ALL the flight of thoughts here, shy, bold, scared, intrusive,  
Fluttering in the sun, between the green and blue,  
Wheeling, whirling, poisoning, lovely and elusive,  
How to cage the flying thoughts, my winged delight, for you?

Set a spring of rhyme, and hope to catch them in it?  
Strew my love as grain to lure them to the snare?  
Watch the hours built up, slow minute piled on minute?  
Still the wide sky guards their flight, and still the cage is bare.

Gleam of hovering feathers, brushing me to flout me!  
Wings, be weary! Rest! Who loves you more than I?  
Caught? Oh fluttering pinions whitening air about me!

Rustling wings, and distant flight, and empty cage and sky!

### **THE MAIDEN'S PRAYER**

SPRING, pretty Spring, what treasure do you bring to me?  
Green grass and buttercups, cherry-bloom and may?  
Sunshine to be glad with me, and little birds to sing to me?  
Warm nests to call me along the woodland way?

Spring, happy Spring, what wonder will you do for me?  
Light the tulip lanterns, and set the furze a-fire?  
Fill your sky with sails of cloud on waves of living blue for me?  
Show me green cornfields and budding of the briar?

Spring, darling Spring, my days will not return to me,  
You who see them fleeting, you, all time above,  
You who move the whole world's heart, ah move one heart to turn  
to me,  
—Bring me a lover, and teach me how to love!

### **SONG**

"LOVE me little, love me long,"  
Is the burden of my song,  
And if nothing more may be  
Little shall suffice for me.

But if you could crown with flowers  
All my radiant, festal hours,  
And console for hours of sorrow  
Love me more with each to-morrow.

And if you would turn my days  
To one splendid hymn of praise,  
And set hopes like stars above me  
Love me much, and always love me!

### **THE MAGIC FLOWER**

THROUGH many days and many days  
The seed of love lay hidden close;  
We walked the dusty tiresome ways

Where never a leaf or blossom grows.  
And in the darkness, all the while,

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