

An Anthology of  
Poems by Children

The Froebel School  
Ibstock Place, Roehampton

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## INTRODUCTION

Shelley says : 'Poetry wakens and enlarges the mind . . . . Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world . . . . A man to be greatly good must imagine intensely and comprehensively ; he must put himself in the place of another and many others . . . . . The great instrument for moral good is the Imagination . . . . . and poetry strengthens it in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb.'

The children who wrote the poems in this book have been experiencing the adventure of poetry ; an exciting, compelling and sometimes painful adventure, but always in the end a satisfactory and compensating one.

The creation of a poem must have an enlarging effect on the writer, and to have created a poem which satisfies some inner urge, even if the satisfaction is only short lived, must have a spiritual effect that is lasting.

When children write poetry it is usually easy to trace what the feeling or experience was which struck the imagination and produced the seed of the poem. The period during which the seed germinates in the unconscious mind is often a brief one and when finally the urge to write comes, the poem may be written down almost in its final form. With children the painful part of the process seems to come during this final stage, when lack of words to express what was felt can be an exasperating and frustrating experience. This is, however, more than compensated for by the joy that comes with completion which is a spiritual experience of great value.

A word of explanation about the poems collected together in this book might be of interest. They are the work of children between seven and twelve years of age from one school, and cover the years from 1942 to 1948. Almost all were written during term time, but only a small proportion were the direct outcome of lessons.

The children have obviously been influenced by the poetry that they have read or heard, and unconsciously some of their work reflects that of other writers. This is unavoidable and not to be deplored since it is a sign that they have shared an imaginative experience with a poet.

We have, however, been at pains to select especially for this book those poems which seem to show some signs of a real and personal emotion recollected in tranquillity.

Little Gaddesden  
Hertfordshire.

JOYCE CAIGER-SMITH.  
Ibstock Place School  
S.W.15.

#### THE COCKEREL

A cockerel, plumed with fine array,  
Stood preening on a fence.

The dusk was not enough to hide  
His great conceit, his lustrous pride,  
As with wide beak he loudly cried,

“ I suffer no offence!”

His little wives, his snow-white hens,  
Were strutting on the ground.

But netting, nailed from tree to tree,  
Was round him, though he did not see,  
Confining his small territory;  
Yet not his pride was bound.

### THE CAT

**S**TEALTHILY he stalks, and quietly,  
Raised upon his tiptoe,  
On his pink pads he is balanced,  
No one hears him go

After small prey, such as mice,  
By the ways he knows,  
While the pale moon up above him,  
Lights the way he goes.

### A CITY

**D**IRTY dark city, black as coal,  
Covered in coal dust, smuts and mud,  
Scarred with slag heaps, pit heads, factories,  
Dirty dark city where is your soul?

Your soul is in the people,  
Miners, roadmen, chimney sweeps, newsboys,  
The overflowing river of humanity.  
Here is your soul, honour, an ever growing steeple.

But your soul is not black, grimy old city.  
Your soul is in the young, the old, the honest ones.  
Your soul is their hearts, the live part, the pure part.  
This is a proud soul, it is not one to pity.



THOSE HATEFUL THINGS

THESE do I hate; the silly boys  
That bicker, far above their heads,  
Of politics and legal things;  
The noisy brats, that in the snow,  
Shout and play till it is slush;  
The smell of ether, strong and plain,  
That brings dark memories back again;  
Foul London, with its dirty streets,  
The smell, the noise, the sooty sky;  
And slimy things, and horse-fly bites,  
And flatt'ring, smiling, oily girls.

LOVE AND GOODNESS COMBINED IN  
THE CHRISTMAS ROSE OF HEAVEN

ALONG the lane villagers return from Church,  
Good peasants may they be  
Yet their hearts are not pure enough to see  
Lying by the roadside the Christmas Rose in bloom.

The delight of this Christmas Rose,  
Is not known to human eye  
Yet to the eye of immortal passers by  
It is made of love and charity combined.

Oh for a sight of the Christmas Rose  
When it blushes under its blanket of snow  
As an Angel comes by and says very low  
Good rose, be glad, for the Father did make thee.

But these good villagers  
When they begin their lives anew  
Will see the rose, in its pleasant hue  
Beneath the snow, as others pass it by.

WILL YOU COME AND SEE?

**N**OW, will you come  
A-gathering with me?  
You and your dog will be  
Good company for three.

See, there the chestnuts  
Glossy and brown;  
See the little squirrels  
Hopping around.

Look, where the wood nymphs  
Harken and play;  
Look where the streamlet  
Sparkles away.

Find, where the beauties of nature are found  
See the sweet wildflowers  
Soft on the ground.  
Joy hath sweet nature created today  
Thank you, oh nature for this lovely day.

AUTUMN

**A**UTUMN; September,  
October, November.  
Blackberries and Hazel Nuts,  
Mud in the deep ruts,  
Leaves from the trees fall,  
From bare twigs the birds call,  
Flowers, oh so many  
A bunch for a penny.  
But when the skies weep  
Inside we keep.  
Mushrooms and Toadstools  
Gathered by Good Schools,  
And the red beech trees  
Stir in the soft breeze.  
Windy and calm days,  
Misty the sun's rays,  
We all are joyful,  
Girlful and Boyful.



## TOBACCO FLOWERS

**L**IKE stars of light  
That shine at night  
Tobacco flowers grow.  
The whites and reds  
Like Angel's heads  
I wish they'd never go.

At dusk when night  
Is growing dim  
Tobacco flowers sweet  
Give out their scent  
With good intent,  
And with my touch they meet.

## COW

**O**N a grassy hill I saw a cow,  
Dappled white and grey,  
She turned her head and looked at me  
Then turned it right away.

She moo-ed with pleasure as she stood  
And then began to eat,  
She munched away, that sunny day  
From the green grass at her feet.

She switched her tail quite happily  
As patiently she stood,  
And looking round her lazily  
She very softly moo-ed.

### THE LAKE

**T**HE cold wind mourns  
All round the glassy lake;  
And the trees bow down  
As the quiet ripples break.

The high wind howls  
And the sea gulls cry;  
The great lake foams  
As the wind screams by.

### THE STREAM

**O** little stream  
Your silver gleam  
Is beautiful to see.  
I know you are a running, running  
Running, to the sea.

O little stream  
Do wait for me,  
Save I see you no more.  
Do stop your running, running, running  
Running to the shore.

O little stream  
Your silver gleam  
Is beautiful to see.  
To whatever place you go  
Will you remember me.

## NIGHT

**T**HE lights are turned on  
As night draws near,  
The fire blazes up  
And the stars are clear.

The old owl hoots  
Once, twice, and again  
Then all is quiet  
Save the falling rain.

## THE DONKEY

**H**E does not frisk nor toss his head,  
But slowly, pondering he walks.  
Old age has made him stiff and slow,  
And only with his friends he talks  
Of things passed long ago.

But yet he's glad, for looking back,  
He thinks of long ago, and when  
His ancestor was standing near  
A baby, who unto all men  
Is holy and most dear.

And then he stands erect, and says  
' Do you not know, O human race  
That once a donkey, dark as night,  
Did carry Him from place to place  
Who gave the Earth her Light?

EVERYTHING NOW IS THE SAME TO ME

*Written after visiting her home which had been damaged by  
air-raids.*

**E**VERYTHING now is the same to me,  
From the stars of the sky—  
To the waves of the sea,  
And even a blade of grass, to me  
Is just like anything else I see.  
As I swim through the land,  
And walk on the sea.

Now if you had asked me a day ago—  
My answer would different have been,  
But now if I live in a land of snow,  
Or live the life of a queen—  
Everything now is the same to me  
Because of what I have seen.

As I lay under an imp tree tall  
I fell in a slumber deep,  
A man came up and took my hand,  
In my dream, as I lay asleep,  
And he led me away, O far away  
To a land beneath the deep.

There the sky was always grey,  
The sun did never shine.  
'Twas there I spent a night and day  
To watch the people pine,  
As they sorrowed and sighed,  
And many they died—  
For the land was in terror of dread famine.

This is why I feel so drear,  
O, everything now is the same to me—  
I feel no joy and feel no fear,  
For the sight of those people comes to me—  
And I hear their stricken cries again,  
The wailing babies and the wailing men,  
And never again will I happiness see—  
O everything now, is the same to me.

*Eleanor Dunsin*

## THE RETURN OF AN AIRMAN

**H**E came as he had always come,  
His heart still brave and true.  
But oh, so tattered were those rags  
That once were Air Force Blue!

His family was failing hope  
So long he'd been away.  
Then happiness was full again  
Upon that marvellous day.

A staunch rear-gunner he had been,  
One of our English Brave,  
With fortitude which reigned supreme  
As nearly his life he gave.

C for Charlie Bomber Crew  
Set out that cruel night,  
And not a single man on board  
Forsaw that failing fight.

The tedious minutes came and went.  
Then did the job begin.  
The bombs fell on to German soil,  
And shattered hopes of sin.

C for Charlie did its part  
At costs past all conception,  
For under flack they tried to move  
By means of sly deception.

They were shot down. One more sad loss  
Of men whose hearts were daring.  
It sounded normal in the news  
But it was tragic hearing.

Out of the eight, six men were killed,  
And three identified.  
And two had got away; but which?  
And who were those that died?

He was alive, he and his mate.  
They wandered on, not clear  
Of where they wandered, 'though they knew  
'Twas far from those so dear.

The Nazis caught them very soon,  
To a prison camp they went.  
It meant some rest for wearied minds,  
That had to be content.

But when their vigour was regained  
They tried a get-away.  
And he succeeded, though alone,  
To go his homeward way.

His family had had no news  
Of him since long ago.  
His wife and children lost their hopes  
So little did they know!

'Twas nigh a year since he had left  
His sunny happy home,  
His two small children and sweet wife,  
And Eastward he had flown.

Now stood he there, a dreamlike form,  
His wife showed such surprise.  
She thought it was a vision and  
Could not believe her eyes.

True, it was dusk, yet none had such  
A form as his, she knew.  
But she had thought her husband dead;  
And yet these clothes were blue.

He stooped and kissed her. All she said  
Was, "Darling, is it you?"  
He came as he had always come,  
His heart still brave and true.

Margaret Webb

12 years

## LISTENING TO MUSIC

ONCE, when I was six years old,  
And did not know what music was,  
But listened with indifferent air,  
Hearing, not thinking on what I heard,  
One evening my mother said  
While getting supper, "Ann, my dear,  
Go, turn the wireless off;" I went,  
But as my hand was on the knob  
A glorious strain of melody  
Entranced me. The knob stayed unturned.  
I, sitting down upon the floor,  
Enraptured listened, motionless.

The music wove itself about,  
And all the gold in harmony  
Was blended in with untold skill.  
When it was finished, there I stayed,  
Then ran to tell my parents that  
I had discovered by myself,  
That beautiful music has the power  
To steal away the human mind  
And keep it for itself a while;  
Then back there comes a mind enriched  
That ponders on the sound it's heard.



### THE DEATH BED

**L**IFE is done, death is near,  
Gone all worry and all fear.  
Soon his body will be rotting  
In the churchyard cemetery,  
While his spirit up in heaven  
Waits on God most gloriously.

### SEASONS

**S**PRING at last,  
Rain falls fast,  
Little mice peep,  
And frogs leap.

The air is brisk,  
Little lambs frisk,  
Flowers come out  
All about.

Summer has come;  
Bees hum,  
Children swim,  
Swallows skim.

Summer is here,  
Autumn is near;  
Farmers are reaping,  
Stacks they are heaping.

The rooks soar high  
And autumn is nigh.  
Flowers are dying,  
Away birds are flying.

Autumn winds blow,  
Trees bend low;  
The leaves are shed;  
The owl nods his head.

Winter has come,  
Fingers are numb,  
All things are dead;  
Robins are fed.

Snow falls fast,  
Christmas is past,  
Children ride sleighs,  
Short are the days.

ON SEEING TREES CUT DOWN

**P**OOOR trees  
Poor birds  
Poor leaves  
The old trees have been cut down  
The nests are broken  
The leaves are brown and withered.

Poor branch  
Poor trunk  
Poor twigs  
The branches are cracked and broken  
The trunk has lost its sap  
And the twigs are no more.

Trees, branch, trunk, twigs and leaves  
They have gone to earth  
The birds have flown away.

### RAIN

**T**HE rain comes down in slanting lines  
And beats the earth with wetted fingers,  
While in the woods the trees sag low  
And rain plays on like fairy singers.

### THE WIND

**T**HE wind which whistles round the house  
And howls about the moor  
Goes where no-one ever goes  
Nor ever went before.

The wind which makes the leaves come down  
And wrecks the ships at sea  
Has been to every place on earth  
And I wish he would take me.

Oh many things the wind has seen,  
He's seen the palm trees sway  
And he's heard the huskeys barking  
As he blows along his way.

### THE FALLEN TREE

**T**HE storm is raging fast and fierce  
And through the cracks the rain drops pierce  
And so I make myself all snug,  
Huddling up on the warm hearth-rug;  
When a mighty crash comes near to me;  
And somebody cries, "The fallen tree!"  
I quickly ask, "What tree, and where?"  
"The old beech tree in the field there."  
Its branches are scattered far and wide,  
Bending the fence on the nearer side:  
The trunk still stands, split white and bare,  
And the gnarled old tree lies twisted there.

### PHOENIX

**T**HEN out of the sapphire sea the phoenix leaps  
Under the dripping boughs with blazing eyes;  
Like the pole star that waking, watchful keeps;  
He soars beneath the writhing agonised skies.  
Angels make no music sweeter, of pure bliss,  
Raptures of silver song that draws the heart;  
So stretched in crimson love and happiness  
That spread the ripples of the weeping part.  
And like a sword the silver-bladed singing  
Floats; and enraptures, kills and breaks the spirit  
Brightly he flashes, on the dark sky winging;  
He comes, he goes, the sad world revels in it.  
Bright wicked phantom from blue incense leaping,  
Above thy head the moon for love is weeping.

## TIME

**W**HILE mountains crumble to dust,  
And the sea flows over the land,  
Time lives on.

While peoples live and die,  
And the Land is left untilled,  
Time lives on.

While tools are left to rust,  
And the grass grows tall,  
Time lives on.

## MARCH

**M**ARCH men march, for the king and his flag.  
Woe to all that tarry, woe to all that lag.  
Over hills and plains, along the dusty road  
Brighten up your spirits and heave up your load.

March men march, for our country and her pride  
Every man his shield-plate and sword by his side.  
March to the battle lads, for on we must go  
And when we get there lad, we'll give 'em a blow.

### A KNIGHT'S SONG

I seize my sword, I grasp my shield,  
I hit, I fence, I strike, I wield,  
The sweat it gathers on my brow  
Oh how I hate my armour now;  
'Tis heavy, stifling hot, and thick.  
And now I feel I must be sick.  
My horse he prances to and fro  
And won't go where I want to go,  
The sun unmercifully glows,  
The sweat comes trickling down my nose.  
Oh how I'd like a glass of gin,  
Alas! the other knight may win  
'Tis sad that we are fighting still,  
And I've not won for all my skill.  
Alas! 'tis good to skilful be,  
But ne'er another day I'll see.

### THE ARCHAEOPTERYX

THE archaeopteryx was a funny sort of bird,  
He was prehistoric and really very weird;  
His feathers once were scales, the scientist says,  
On that quaint old bird of Jurassic days.

His head, like a pelican's but not quite so long,  
Had a snout that grew teeth both ugly and strong,  
His wings were quite large and so was his tail;  
We don't think he could sing but perhaps he could wail!



ON LOOKING INTO A BOOK  
OF  
COMMON ENTRANCE PAPERS

THESE papers must have called up many a sigh,  
When, with bewildered frown, in days gone by,  
Boys puzzled o'er problems made by learned men  
Whose sole aim was dashing with the pen  
A child's hopes. These ruthless men have set  
Problems too hard for any child born yet.

The invigilator prowls about the room,  
Stopping anon to cast still deeper gloom  
Upon the mind of some poor victim child.  
The fevered brains are driven nearly wild  
By sum and map, whose intricate design  
Makes me glad these problems are not mine.

And yet, I've seen some easy questions too;  
Perhaps they're not so very hard to do.

DUCKS

THE mallard drake swims through the rushes.  
The ducks come close behind.  
The mallard drake he loves the ducks  
And he to them is kind.

A frog jumps up in front of him,  
He leaves it to his wives.  
I wish that men would leave ducks safe  
And give them peaceful lives.

AS I WALKED DOWN A STREET ONE DAY

**A**S I walked down a street one day  
I saw a horse, he was dragging a cart;  
He was lean and tired looking, with sorrowful eyes  
But had obviously once been both fat, sprite and gay.  
He was munching a small meagre portion of straw  
While his master a milkman was carrying some milk.  
The cart was still heavy though half of its load  
Had already been taken away.  
I felt pity and anger both deep in my heart,  
The first for the pony, the second, the man.  
You wicked fool, you sinful ass!—  
Why had I mentioned an ass, a both kind and gentle beast

No, this man was just himself,  
Of typically human flesh and blood.  
This horse would never more have freedom,  
No more swift play upon the moors,  
But labouring for a cruel and selfish man.  
And then the milkman came.  
I patted the pony's nose as I moved on  
And I glared at the selfish man.  
How typical we are of ourselves.

ONE EVENING, LATE AFTER A LONG DAY'S RIDE

**O**NE evening, late, after a long day's ride,  
I, hurrying home to tea, saw the sun go down  
And knew that I'd be late for tea, and angrily tried  
With crop and heels to make my horse move on  
And walk along much faster, fearing I'd be later than I was:  
And suddenly I felt the impassiveness and bulk  
Of my pony so much stronger than myself  
Bearing me steadily home, tired with the work:  
Therefore I let my pony walk, without malice, slowly home  
Until at last my anger left me and flew off into the dusk.

### A WILD BABY RABBIT

**T**HIS fluffy, furry yet fragile  
Shape of life, snuggled down in a crevice of my arm  
Oh this desire to draw it yet closer to me  
Even unto squeezing the very breath  
Out of the helpless little form.  
Were it not for precious life, I would.  
Oh, what inconsiderate fools men are  
Had they but the heart  
To choose *and win*.  
Yet about the fields they will roam  
To aim, and kill these,  
Whom I love.

### THE BABY BIRD

**A** weak, tiny, helpless scrap of feathers,  
You've lost your mother, you know not where to go,  
The world is strange, it is frightening and cruel,  
You can not tell who is your friend or your foe.

Poor little weakling, I'm all you have  
To protect you and keep you from fear,  
You will miss your mother, my tiny friend,  
But do not be frightened, I am here.

### A FRAGMENT

**A** WAKE Oh wild west wind from thine ivory bed of snow,  
Over Arabia's perfumed sands to the Phoenix' nest  
thou must blow,  
Gathering diamonds of memory from the cities where you go.

### CLOCKS

**I** do not like the modern clocks  
So much as the old clocks.  
I like to see the works plainly  
As well as a good outside.  
The works of a modern clock  
Are not so good or so well done  
As those that were made by hand.  
The best clocks were made in the 16th and 17th century,  
Some were strange. They were generally French—  
The very strange ones.  
These had china cases and some had wooden works,  
And in some the dial moved round  
And the one hand stood still.  
The very early clocks were worked by weights  
But now they use springs generally.  
Modern clocks are mostly made by machine,  
That's why I like older clocks  
Designed by one man who made the parts separately  
And put them altogether in the way that he planned.

### THE DIVER

**D**OWN, down, down,  
The Diver hung from the rope,  
And down into the sea he went,  
And farther down the Diver went  
And farther still,  
Down through the depths of the sea he went.  
And small fish swam past him  
And larger fish, more threatening ones,  
Stared, and swam away,  
And then at last—  
Then the Diver was among rocks  
At the bottom of the sea.  
Climbed over rocks  
And went into the wrecked ship.  
Collected what he wanted,  
Came out of the wrecked ship  
And was about to be hauled up again;  
When from behind a rock  
A black whip lash  
Whipped about the Diver's waist,  
Another whiplash round his legs.  
But on board the ship,  
The men they hauled on the rope.  
But the rope snapped—  
And the Diver was drowned  
At the bottom of the sea.

### THE SWAN

**T**HE Swan  
He flies  
So noisily  
I like the noise  
He makes.  
I saw him fly  
Across the sky  
Along the way he takes.



### THE GARDEN PATH

**I** walk along the garden path  
Guess what I espy.  
A blackbird strutting on the lawn  
Quite nearby.

I walk a little futher on  
To a place apart,  
A chaffinch sitting on a tree  
Sings all his heart.

### THE CHRIST CHILD

**I**N a small manger  
The Christ Child lay,  
And Mary stood by him  
And quietly did say,

“ I love thee dear baby,  
I love thee dear boy.  
Sleep soundly dear Jesus,  
You give me great joy.”

And Jesus slept soundly,  
And Joseph stood near,  
And Shepherds from mountains  
Came gathering there.