

## 73 ROSE IN THE GARDEN

Thirty years have come and gone,  
Melting away like Southern snows,  
Since, in the light of a summer's night,  
I went to the garden to seek my Rose.

*Mine!* Do you hear it, silver moon,  
Flooding my heart with your mellow shine?  
*Mine!* Be witness, ye distant stars,  
Looking on me with eyes divine!

Tell me, tell me, wandering winds,  
Whisper it, if you may not speak --  
Did you ever, in all your round,  
Fan a lovelier brow or cheek?

Long I nursed in my heart the love,  
Love which I felt, but dared not tell,  
Till, I scarcely know how or when --  
It found wild words, --*and all was well!*

I can hear her sweet voice even now --  
It makes my pulse leap and thrill --  
"I owe you more than I well can pay;  
You may take, me, Robert, if you will!"

Days passed. One pleasant summer night,  
I paced the garden walks alone,  
Looking about with restless eyes,  
Wondering whither my Rose had flown,

Till, from a leafy arbor near,  
There came to my ears the sound of speech.  
Who can be with my Rose to-night?  
Let me hide under the beach.

It must be one of her female friends,  
Talking with her in the gloaming gray;  
Perchance -- I thought -- they may speak of me:  
Let me listen to what they say.

This I said with a careless smile,  
And a joyous heart that was free from fears;  
Little I dreamed that the words I heard  
Would weigh on my heavy heart for years.

"Rose, my Rose! for your heart is mine,"  
I heard in a low voice, passion-fraught,  
"In the sight of Heaven we are truly one;  
Why will you cast me away for naught?"

"Will you give your hand where your heart goes not,  
To a man who is grave and stern and old;  
And whose love compared with my passion-heat,  
As the snow of the frozen North, is cold?"

And Rose -- I could *feel* her cheek grow pale --  
Her voice was tremulous, then grew strong --  
"Richard," she said, "your words are wild,  
And you do my guardian bitter wrong.

"Did you never hear how, years gone by," --  
She spoke in a tremulous undertone --  
"Bereft of friends, o'er the world's highways,  
I wandered forth as a child alone?"

"He opened to me his home and heart --  
He whom you call so stern and cold --  
And my grateful heart I may well bestow  
On him for his kindness manifold."

"Rose," he said, in a saddened tone,  
"I thank him for all he has done for thee;  
He has acted nobly -- I did him wrong --  
But is there no voice in your heart for me?"

And Rose -- she trembled -- I felt it all;  
I heard her quick breath come and go;  
Her voice was broken; she only said,  
"Have pity, Richard, and let me go!"

And then -- Heaven gave me strength, I think --  
I stood before them calm and still;  
You might have thought my tranquil breast  
Had never known one passion-thrill.

And they alternate flushed and paled;  
Rose tottered, and I feared would fall;  
I caught her in supporting arms,  
And whispered, "Rose, I heard it all.

"I had a dream, but it is passed,  
That we might journey, hand in hand  
Along the rugged steeps of life,  
Until we reached God's promised land.

"This was my dream; -- 'tis over now; --  
Thank Heaven, it is not yet too late!  
I pray no selfish act of mine  
May keep two young hearts separate."

I placed her passive hand in his --  
With how much pain God only knows --  
And blessing him for her sweet sake,  
I left him standing with my Rose!

**Sources:**

Grand'ther Baldwin's Thanksgiving, 1875.  
Alger Street, 1964.