

97 THE QUEEN OF BABY LAND

Let those who will in Milton's praise
Essay the sounding line:
I place my votive offering
On quite another shrine
That task I leave to other hands
More fitted to the use,
Enough for me to chant in rhyme
Thy praises, Mother Goose!

Thy name is homely — yet should that
Thy moral influence clog?
Or how shall those deride thy muse
Who venerate a Hogg?
We hail thee queen of Baby Land,
And may thy kindly sway
Abide in all our nurseries
Forever and a day!

Full many a baby's tender heart,
Great Mother Goose, shall thrill,
On hearing thy pathetic lines
About poor Jack and Jill
Ah, many a time I well recall,
My blood congealed to ice
On hearing that thrice mournful tale
About the three blind mice.
I've doubled up my childish fist,
With thoughts of vengeance rife,
And felt how much I'd like to slay
The cruel farmer's wife.

My eyes were opened very wide,
My infant wonder grew,
In reading of the ancient dame
Residing in a shoe,
Whose offspring were so numerous
She knew not what to do!
Sometimes I've laid me on the grass,
And looking up on high,

Have fancied with my childish eyes
I might perchance espy
The lady that's employed to sweep
The cobwebs from the sky.

I well recall the fearful fate
Of Gotham's sapient three
Who in a fragile bowl essayed
The perils of the sea;
A feat of daring quite unmatched:
Yet in my childish soul
The question rose — which first were cracked;
The wise men or the bowl?

I would that I had skill to paint,
The Human face divine,
I'd buy some canvass and a brush
And quickly picture thine.
I think I see the placid face,
Thy specs with iron bows,

That seem to sit with conscious pride
Astride thy placid nose,
A cap conceals thy scanty hair,
A cap with ample frill,
Bequeathed thee by thy aged dame
That lived upon the hill.

Hail! Great enchantress Mother Goose!
Immortal are thy lays:
Where shall a worthier brow be found
To wear the poet's bays?
We crown the queen of Baby Land,
And may thy kindly sway
Abide in all our nurseries
Forever and a day!

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