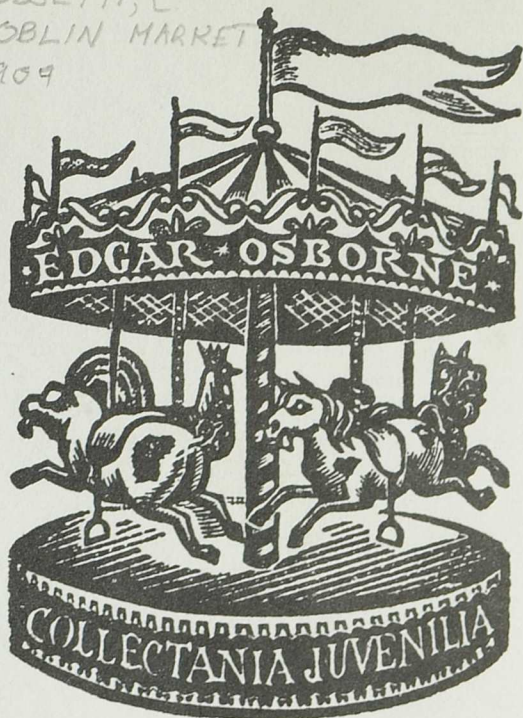




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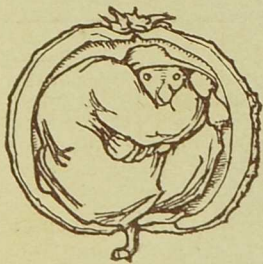


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# GOBLIN MARKET





MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
LONDON BOMBAY CALCUTTA  
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
NEW YORK · BOSTON · CHICAGO  
ATLANTA · SAN FRANCISCO

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD  
TORONTO









GOBLIN  
MARKET

BY  
CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

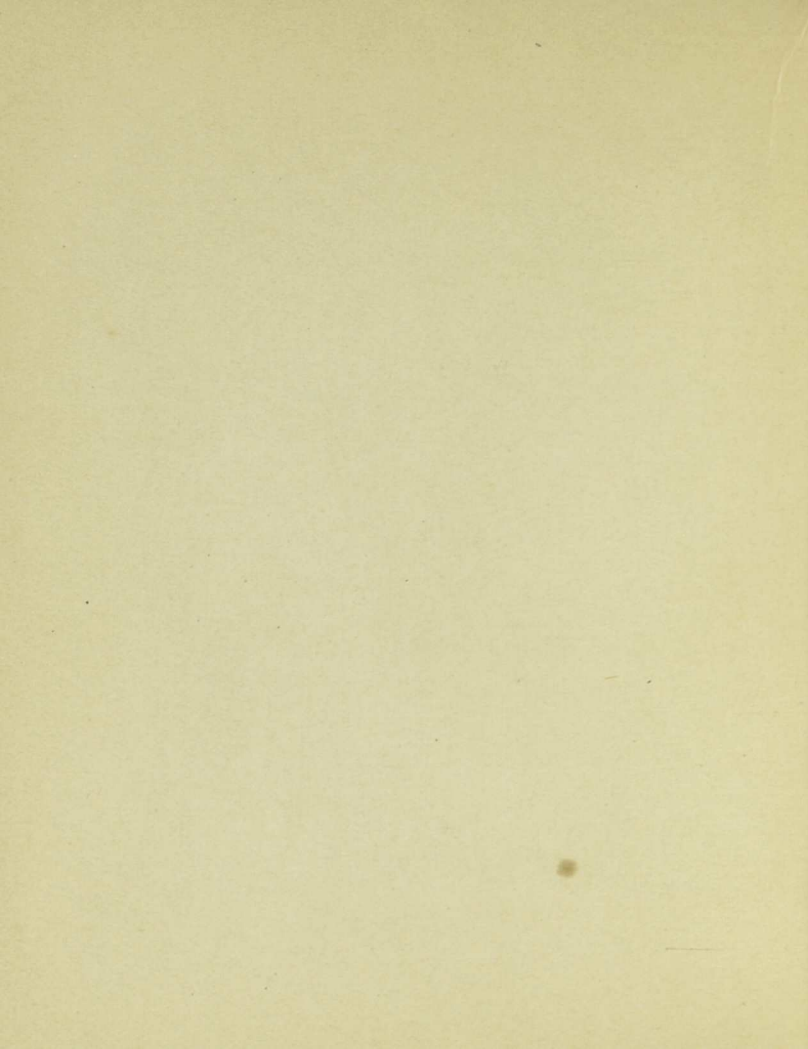
ILLUSTRATED BY  
LAURENCE HOUSMAN

MACMILLAN AND CO. LIMITED  
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1909

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First published with illustrations by  
L. Housman, 1893.





## GOBLIN MARKET

MORNING and evening

Maids heard the goblins cry :

‘Come buy our orchard fruits,

Come buy, come buy :

Apples and quinces,

Lemons and oranges,

Plump unpecked cherries,

Melons and raspberries,

Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,

10      GOBLIN MARKET

Swart-headed mulberries,  
Wild free-born cranberries,  
Crab-apples, dewberries,  
Pine-apples, blackberries,  
Apricots, strawberries ;—  
All ripe together  
In summer weather,—  
Morns that pass by,  
Fair eves that fly ;  
Come buy, come buy :  
Our grapes fresh from the vine,  
Pomegranates full and fine,  
Dates and sharp bullaces,  
Rare pears and greengages  
Damsons and bilberries,

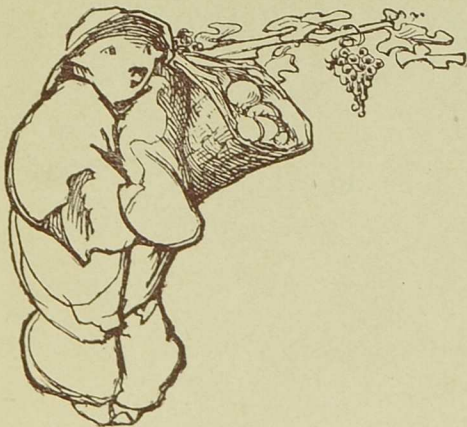






Taste them and try :

Currants and gooseberries,



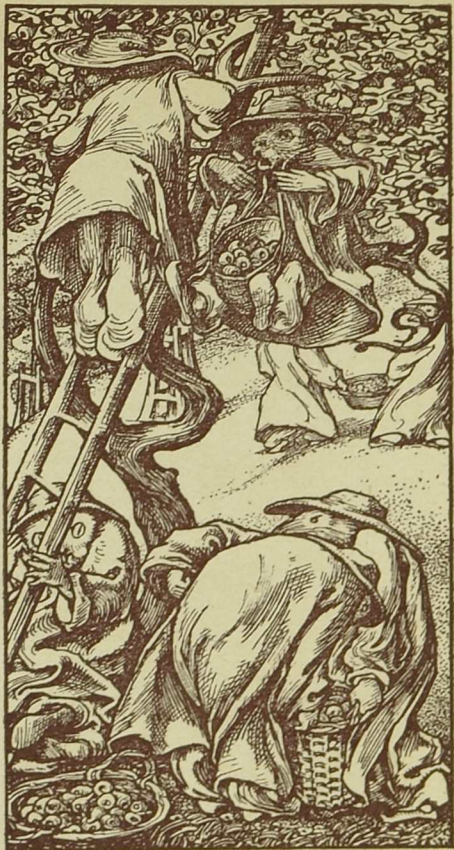
Bright-fire-like barberries,

Figs to fill your mouth,

Citrons from the South,

Sweet to tongue and sound to eye ;  
Come buy, come buy.'  
Evening by evening  
Among the brookside rushes,  
Laura bowed her head to hear,  
Lizzie veiled her blushes :  
Crouching close together  
In the cooling weather,  
With clasping arms and cautioning lips,  
With tingling cheeks and finger tips.  
'Lie close,' Laura said,  
Pricking up her golden head :  
'We must not look at goblin men,  
We must not buy their fruits :  
Who knows upon what soil they fed







B



Their hungry thirsty roots?’

‘Come buy,’ call the goblins

Hobbling down the glen.

‘Oh,’ cried Lizzie, ‘Laura, Laura,

You should not peep at goblin men.’

Lizzie covered up her eyes,

Covered close lest they should look ;

Laura reared her glossy head,

And whispered like the restless brook :

‘Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,

Down the glen tramp little men.

One hauls a basket,

One bears a plate,

One lugs a golden dish

Of many pounds’ weight.

20      GOBLIN MARKET

How fair the vine must grow  
Whose grapes are so luscious ;  
How warm the wind must blow  
Through these fruit bushes.’  
‘No,’ said Lizzie : ‘No, no, no ;  
Their offers should not charm us,  
Their evil gifts would harm us.’  
She thrust a dimpled finger  
In each ear, shut eyes and ran :  
Curious Laura chose to linger  
Wondering at each merchant man.  
One had a cat’s face,  
One whisked a tail,  
One tramped at a rat’s pace,  
One crawled like a snail,



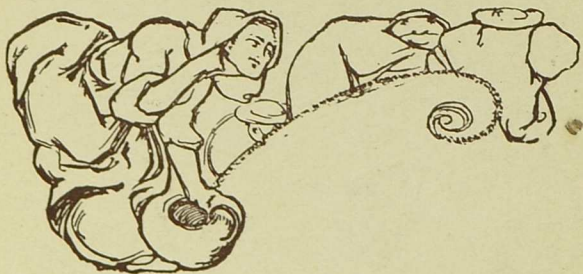






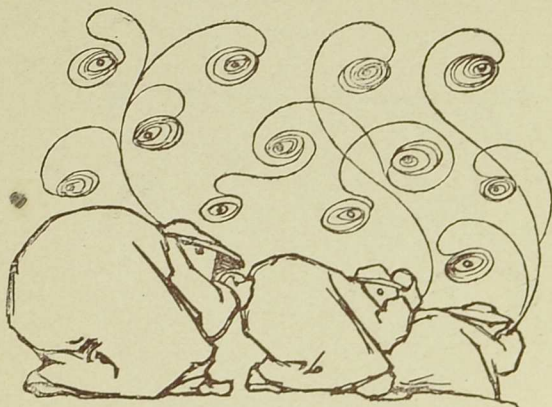


One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,  
One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry.  
She heard a voice like voice of doves



Cooing all together :  
They sounded kind and full of loves  
In the pleasant weather.  
Laura stretched her gleaming neck

Like a rush-imbedded swan,  
Like a lily from the beck,



Like a moonlit poplar branch  
Like a vessel at the launch  
When its last restraint is gone.

Backwards up the mossy glen  
Turned and trooped the goblin men.  
With their shrill repeated cry,  
'Come buy, come buy.'  
When they reached where Laura was



They stood stock still upon the moss,  
Leering at each other,  
Brother with queer brother;  
Signalling each other,  
Brother with sly brother.  
One set his basket down,

28      GOBLIN MARKET

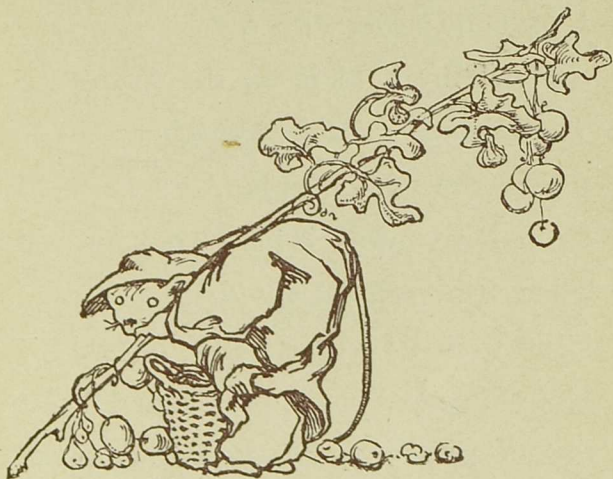
One reared his plate ;  
One began to weave a crown  
Of tendrils, leaves, and rough nuts brown  
(Men sell not such in any town) ;  
One heaved the golden weight  
Of dish and fruit to offer her :  
'Come buy, come buy,' was still their cry.  
Laura stared but did not stir,  
Longed but had no money.  
The whisk-tailed merchant bade her taste  
In tones as smooth as honey,  
The cat-faced purr'd,  
The rat-paced spoke a word  
Of welcome, and the snail-paced even  
was heard ;







One parrot-voiced and jolly  
Cried 'Pretty Goblin' still for 'Pretty  
Polly';



One whistled like a bird.  
But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste:

32      GOBLIN MARKET

‘Good Folk, I have no coin ;

To take were to purloin :

I have no copper in my purse,

I have no silver either,

And all my gold is on the furze

That shakes in windy weather

Above the rusty heather.’

‘You have much gold upon your head,’

They answered all together :

‘Buy from us with a golden curl.’

She clipped a precious golden lock,

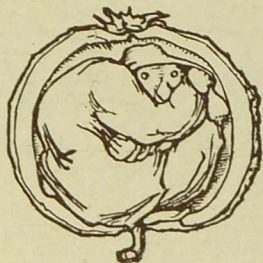
She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,

Then sucked their fruit globes fair or

red.

Sweeter than honey from the rock,

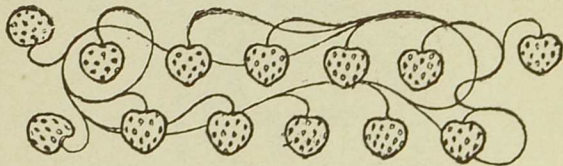
Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,  
Clearer than water flowed that juice ;  
She never tasted such before,  
How should it cloy with length of use ?



She sucked and sucked and sucked the  
more

Fruits which that unknown orchard bore ;  
She sucked until her lips were sore ;

Then flung the emptied rinds away  
But gathered up one kernel stone,  
And knew not was it night or day  
As she turned home alone.



Lizzie met her at the gate  
Full of wise upbraidings :  
' Dear, you should not stay so late,  
Twilight is not good for maidens ;  
Should not loiter in the glen

In the haunts of goblin men.  
Do you not remember Jeanie,  
How she met them in the moonlight,  
Took their gifts both choice and many,  
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers  
Plucked from bowers  
Where summer ripens at all hours?  
But ever in the moonlight  
She pined and pined away ;  
Sought them by night and day,  
Found them no more, but dwindled and  
grew grey ;  
Then fell with the first snow,  
While to this day no grass will grow  
Where she lies low :

36 GOBLIN MARKET

I planted daisies there a year ago  
That never blow.

You should not loiter so.'

'Nay, hush,' said Laura :

'Nay, hush, my sister :

I ate and ate my fill,

Yet my mouth waters still :

To-morrow night I will

Buy more ;' and kissed her.

'Have done with sorrow ;

I'll bring you plums to-morrow

Fresh on their mother twigs,

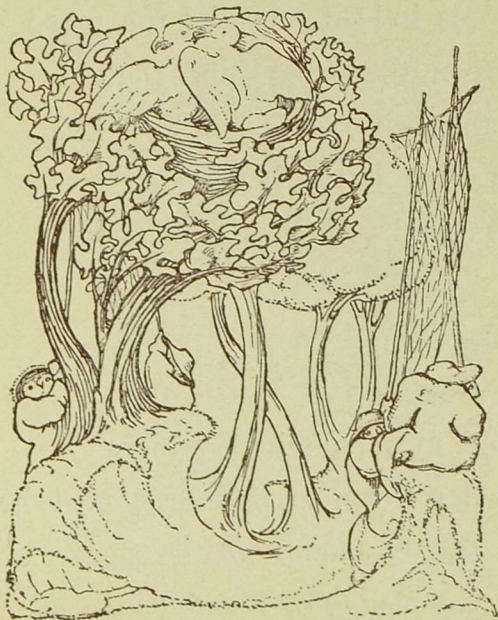
Cherries worth getting ;

You cannot think what figs

My teeth have met in,



What melons icy-cold  
Piled on a dish of gold

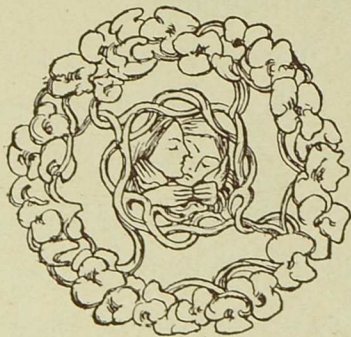


38      GOBLIN MARKET

Too huge for me to hold,  
What peaches with a velvet nap,  
Pellucid grapes without one seed :  
Odorous indeed must be the mead  
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave  
          they drink  
With lilies at the brink,  
And sugar-sweet their sap.'

Golden head by golden head,  
Like two pigeons in one nest  
Folded in each other's wings,  
They lay down in their curtained bed :  
Like two blossoms on one stem,  
Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,

Like two wands of ivory  
Tipped with gold for awful kings.  
Moon and stars gazed in at them,



Wind sang to them lullaby,  
Lumbering owls forebore to fly,  
Not a bat flapped to and fro

40 GOBLIN MARKET

Round their nest :

Cheek to cheek and breast to breast

Locked together in one nest.

Early in the morning

When the first cock crowed his warning,

Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,

Laura rose with Lizzie :

Fetched in honey, milked the cows,

Aired and set to rights the house,

Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,

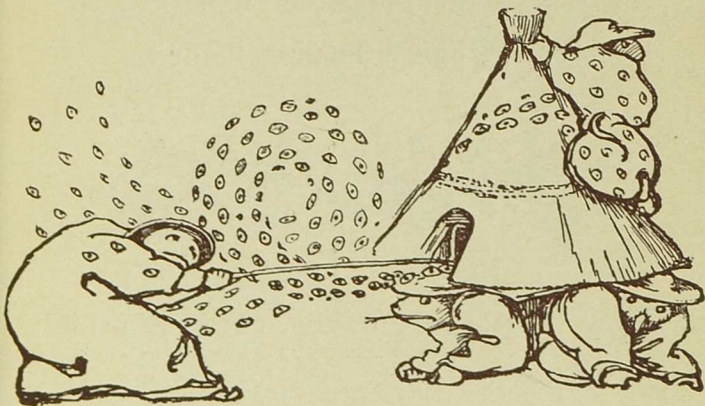
Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,

Next churned butter, whipped up cream,

Fed their poultry, sat and sewed ;

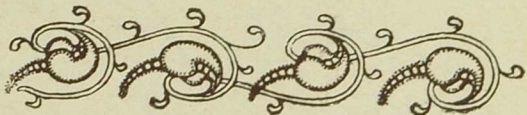
Talked as modest maidens should :

Lizzie with an open heart,  
Laura in an absent dream,  
One content, one sick in part ;



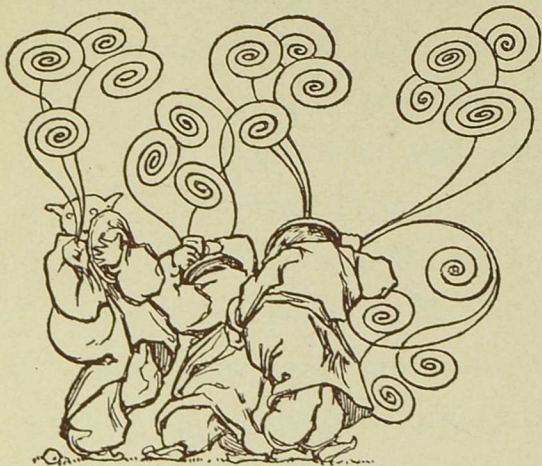
One warbling for the mere bright day's  
delight,  
One longing for the night.

At length slow evening came :  
They went with pitchers to the reedy  
brook ;  
Lizzie most placid in her look,  
Laura most like a leaping flame.



They drew the gurgling water from its  
deep.  
Lizzie plucked purple and rich golden  
flags,  
Then turning homeward said : 'The sun-  
set flushes

Those furthest loftiest crags ;  
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags.



No wilful squirrel wags,  
The beasts and birds are fast asleep.'  
But Laura loitered still among the rushes

## 44      GOBLIN MARKET

And said the bank was steep.  
And said the hour was early still,  
The dew not fall'n, the wind not chill ;  
Listening ever, but not catching  
The customary cry,  
'Come buy, come buy,'  
With its iterated jingle  
Of sugar-baited words :  
Not for all her watching  
Once discerning even one goblin  
Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling—  
Let alone the herds  
That used to tramp along the glen,  
In groups or single,  
Of brisk fruit-merchant men.







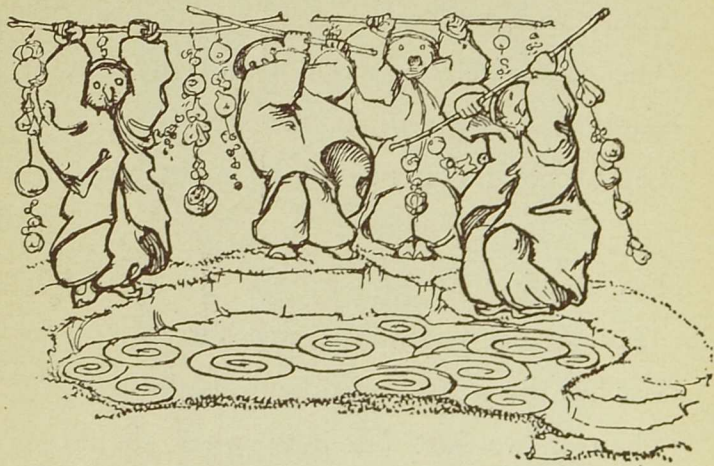
Till Lizzie urged, 'O Laura, come :  
I hear the fruit-call, but I dare not look :  
You should not loiter longer at this brook :  
Come with me home.

The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,  
Each glow-worm winks her spark,  
Let us get home before the night grows  
dark :

For clouds may gather  
Though this is summer weather,  
Put out the lights and drench us through ;  
Then if we lost our way what should  
we do?'

Laura turned cold as stone  
To find her sister heard that cry alone,

That goblin cry,  
'Come buy our fruits, come buy.'



Must she then buy no more such dainty  
fruit?

Must she no more such succous pasture find,  
Gone deaf and blind?

Her tree of life drooped from the root:  
She said not one word in her heart's  
sore ache:

But peering thro' the dimness, nought  
discerning,

Trudged home, her pitcher dripping all  
the way;

So crept to bed, and lay

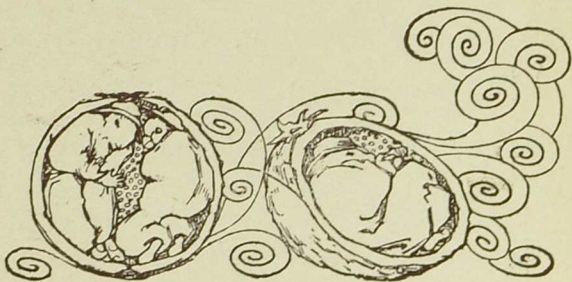
Silent till Lizzie slept;

Then sat up in a passionate yearning,  
And gnashed her teeth for baulked desire,  
and wept

As if her heart would break.

50 GOBLIN MARKET

Day after day, night after night,  
Laura kept watch in vain  
In sullen silence of exceeding pain.  
She never caught again the goblin cry,



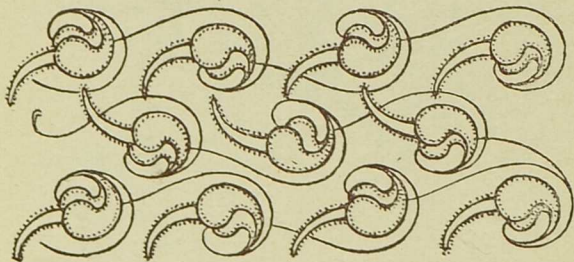
‘Come buy, come buy;’—  
She never spied the goblin men  
Hawking their fruits along the glen:  
But when the noon waxed bright







Her hair grew thin and grey ;  
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth  
turn  
To swift decay and burn  
Her fire away.

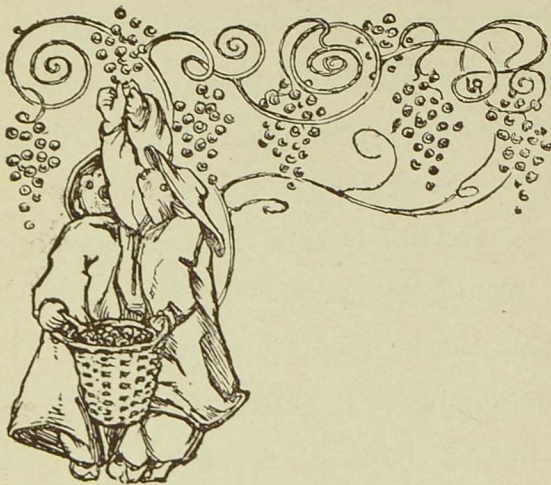


One day remembering her kernel-stone  
She set it by a wall that faced the south ;  
Dewed it with tears, hoped for a root,

Watched for a waxing shoot,  
But there came none.  
It never saw the sun,



It never felt the trickling moisture run :  
While with sunk eyes and faded mouth



She dreamed of melons, as a traveller sees  
False waves in desert drouth

56      GOBLIN MARKET

With shade of leaf-crowned trees,  
And burns the thirstier in the sandful  
    breeze.

She no more swept the house,  
Tended the fowls or cows,  
Fetched honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,  
Brought water from the brook :  
But sat down listless in the chimney-nook  
And would not eat.

Tender Lizzie could not bear  
To watch her sister's cankerous care,  
Yet not to share.

She night and morning  
Caught the goblins' cry :  
'Come buy our orchard fruits,

Come buy, come buy : '—  
Beside the brook, along the glen,  
She heard the tramp of goblin men,  
The voice and stir  
Poor Laura could not hear ;  
Longed to buy fruit to comfort her,  
But feared to pay too dear.  
She thought of Jeanie in her grave,  
Who should have been a bride ;  
But who for joys brides hope to have  
Fell sick and died  
In her gay prime,  
In earliest winter time,  
With the first glazing rime,  
With the first snow-fall of crisp winter time.

58      GOBLIN MARKET

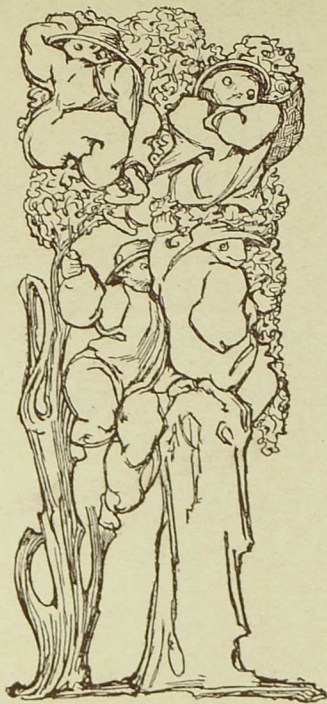
Till Laura dwindling

Seemed knocking at Death's door.



Then Lizzie weighed no more

Better and worse ;



60      GOBLIN MARKET

But put a silver penny in her purse,  
Kissed Laura, crossed the heath with  
clumps of furze

At twilight, halted by the brook :  
And for the first time in her life  
Began to listen and look.

Laughed every goblin  
When they spied her peeping :  
Came towards her hobbling,  
Flying, running, leaping,  
Puffing and blowing,  
Chuckling, clapping, crowing,  
Clucking and gobbling,  
Mopping and mowing,



Full of airs and graces,  
Pulling wry faces,  
Demure grimaces,  
Cat-like and rat-like,  
Ratel- and wombat-like,  
Snail-paced in a hurry,  
Parrot-voiced and whistler,  
Helter skelter, hurry skurry,  
Chattering like magpies,  
Fluttering like pigeons,  
Gliding like fishes,—  
Hugged her and kissed her :  
Squeezed and caressed her :  
Stretched up their dishes,  
Panniers, and plates :

'Look at our apples



Russet and dun,  
Bob at our cherries,

Bite at our peaches,  
Citrons and dates,  
Grapes for the asking,



Pears red with basking  
Out in the sun,  
Plums on their twigs ;  
Pluck them and suck them,—

Pomegranates, figs.'

'Good folk,' said Lizzie,

Mindful of Jeanie :

'Give me much and many :'

Held out her apron,

Tossed them her penny.

'Nay, take a seat with us,

Honour and eat with us,'

They answered grinning :

'Our feast is but beginning.

Night yet is early,

Warm and dew-pearly,

Wakeful and starry :

Such fruits as these

No man can carry ;

E





70 GOBLIN MARKET

No longer wagging, purring,  
But visibly demurring,  
Grunting and snarling.  
One called her proud,  
Cross-grained, uncivil ;  
Their tones waxed loud,  
Their looks were evil.  
Lashing their tails  
They trod and hustled her,  
Elbowed and jostled her,  
Clawed with their nails,  
Barking, mewing, hissing, mocking,  
Tore her gown and soiled her stocking,  
Twitched her hair out by the roots,  
Stamped upon her tender feet,



Held her hands and squeezed their fruits  
Against her mouth to make her eat.



White and golden Lizzie stood,  
Like a lily in a flood,—

Like a rock of blue-veined stone



Lashed by tides obstreperously,—  
Like a beacon left alone

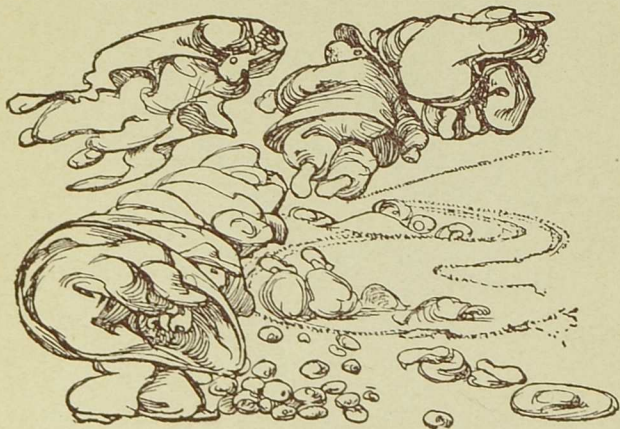
In a hoary roaring sea,  
Sending up a golden fire,—  
Like a fruit-crowned orange-tree  
White with blossoms honey-sweet  
Sore beset by wasp and bee,—  
Like a royal virgin town  
Topped with gilded dome and spire  
Close beleaguered by a fleet  
Mad to tug her standard down.

One may lead a horse to water,  
Twenty cannot make him drink.  
Though the goblins cuffed and caught her,  
Coaxed and fought her,  
Bullied and besought her,

Scratched her, pinched her black as ink,  
Kicked and knocked her,  
Mauled and mocked her,  
Lizzie uttered not a word ;  
Would not open lip from lip  
Lest they should cram a mouthful in :  
But laughed in heart to feel the drip  
Of juice that syruped all her face,  
And lodged in dimples of her chin,  
And streaked her neck which quaked like  
    curd.

At last the evil people,  
Worn out by her resistance,  
Flung back her penny, kicked their fruit  
Along whichever road they took,

Not leaving root or stone or shoot ;  
Some writhed into the ground,



Some dived into the brook  
With ring and ripple,

76      GOBLIN MARKET

Some scudded on the gale without a  
    sound,

Some vanished in the distance.



In a smart, ache, tingle,  
Lizzie went her way ;  
Knew not was it night or day ;  
Sprang up the bank, tore thro' the furze,



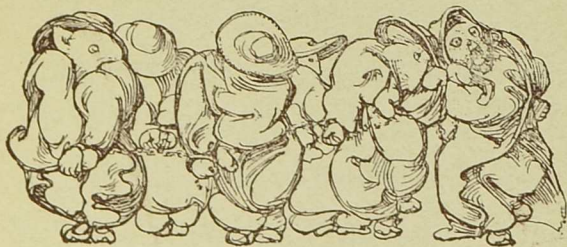








Threaded copse and dingle,  
And heard her penny jingle  
Bouncing in her purse,—  
Its bounce was music to her ear.



She ran and ran  
As if she feared some goblin man  
Dogged her with gibe or curse  
Or something worse :

But not one goblin skurried after,  
Nor was she pricked by fear ;  
The kind heart made her windy-paced  
That urged her home quite out of breath  
with haste

And inward laughter.

She cried, 'Laura,' up the garden,  
'Did you miss me ?

Come and kiss me.

Never mind my bruises,

Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices

Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,

Goblin pulp and goblin dew.

Eat me, drink me, love me ;

Laura, make much of me ;

For your sake I have braved the glen  
And had to do with goblin merchant men.'

Laura started from her chair,  
Flung her arms up in the air,  
Clutched her hair :

'Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted  
For my sake the fruit forbidden?  
Must your light like mine be hidden,  
Your young life like mine be wasted,  
Undone in mine undoing,  
And ruined in my ruin,  
Thirsty, cankered, goblin-ridden?'—

She clung about her sister,  
Kissed and kissed and kissed her :  
Tears once again

84 GOBLIN MARKET

Refreshed her shrunken eyes,  
Dropping like rain  
After long sultry drouth ;



Shaking with aguish fear, and pain,  
She kissed and kissed her with a hungry  
mouth.  
Her lips began to scorch,

GOBLIN MARKET 85

That juice was wormwood to her tongue,  
She loathed the feast :

Writhing as one possessed she leaped and  
    sung,

Rent all her robe, and wrung  
Her hands in lamentable haste,  
And beat her breast.

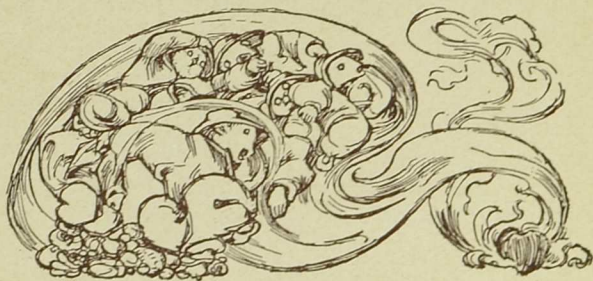
Her locks streamed like the torch  
Borne by a racer at full speed,  
Or like the mane of horses in their  
    flight,

Or like an eagle when she stems the  
    light

Straight toward the sun,  
Or like a caged thing freed,

86      GOBLIN MARKET

Or like a flying flag when armies run.  
Swift fire spread through her veins,  
knocked at her heart,



Met the fire smouldering there  
And overbore its lesser flame ;  
She gorged on bitterness without a name ;  
Ah fool, to choose such part



Of soul-consuming care !

Sense failed in the mortal strife :

Like the watch-tower of a town

Which an earthquake shatters down,

Like a lightning-stricken mast,



Like a wind-uprooted tree

Spun about,

Like a foam-topped waterspout

Cast down headlong in the sea,

She fell at last ;

88      GOBLIN MARKET

Pleasure past and anguish past,

Is it death or is it life?

Life out of death.

That night long Lizzie watched by her,

Counted her pulse's flagging stir,

Felt for her breath,

Held water to her lips, and cooled her face

With tears and fanning leaves.

But when the first birds chirped about

    their eaves,

And early reapers plodded to the place

Of golden sheaves,

And dew-wet grass

Bowed in the morning winds so brisk to

    pass,

And new buds with new day  
Opened of cup-like lilies on the stream,  
Laura awoke from as a dream,



Laughed in the innocent old way,  
Hugged Lizzie but not twice or thrice ;  
Her gleaming locks showed not one  
thread of grey.

Her breath was sweet as May,  
And light danced in her eyes.  
Days, weeks, months, years



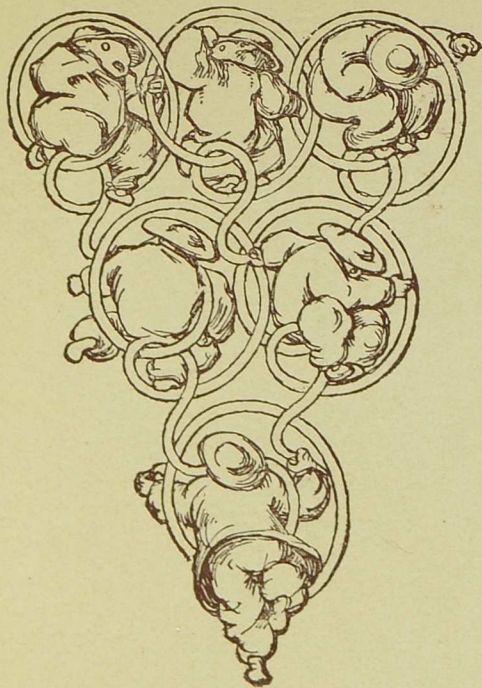
Afterwards, when both were wives  
With children of their own ;  
Their mother-hearts beset with fears,  
Their lives bound up in tender lives ;  
Laura would call the little ones

And tell them of her early prime,  
Those pleasant days long gone  
Of not-returning time :  
Would talk about the haunted glen,  
The wicked quaint fruit-merchant men,  
Their fruits like honey to the throat  
But poison in the blood  
(Men sell not such in any town):  
Would tell them how her sister stood  
In deadly peril to do her good,  
And win the fiery antidote :  
Then joining hands to little hands  
Would bid them cling together,—  
'For there is no friend like a sister  
In calm or stormy weather ;

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To cheer one on the tedious way,  
To fetch one if one goes astray,  
To lift one if one totters down,  
To strengthen whilst one stands.'

*27 April 1859.*







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