

Midsummer Night—

I.

Down through the field in the fading light
The milkmaid goes with her tin pails bright;
Stoops by the spring underneath the pines,
And pushes aside the clustering vines,
Plunges them into the babbling pool,
And holds them, waiting, till drenched and cool;
Then rises and goes through the long, wet grass,
By the narrow path where the cattle pass,
Cheerily calling, strong and free,
"So-ook-e! So-ook-e! So-ook-e-e!"



II.

Over the hill where the dying sun
Lingers a moment when day is done,
And flushes the west with a flood of light,
The plowboy goes in the fragrant night,
Singing and whistling right merrily,
For his heart is clean and his soul is free;
Switching the flowers, and taking no heed
How far in the distance the horses feed;
And they sidle away with a long, slow lope,
When he calls "Co'p, Van! Co'p, Bill! Co'p! Co'p!"

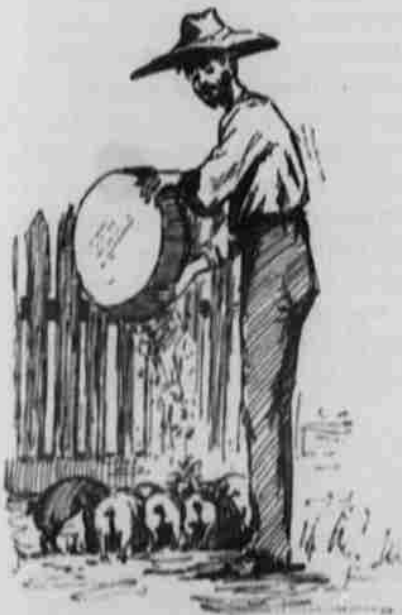
III.

Out to the barnyard the farmer goes,
Where the stream steals thro' and sings as it flows;
Wearily plodding with soil-worn feet,
He yet finds something vaguely sweet
In the low, soft murmur of myriad frogs
And the noisy welcome of well-kept hogs;
He counts them—and one is away or lost;
So quick in the trough the food is tossed,
While the farmer calls loudly and anxiously,
"Po-oo-e! Po-oo-e! Poo-oo-e-e!"



IV.

Out to the orchard the housewife goes,
Where the dews fall thickly on pansy and rose,
Chases the chickens from roost on the trees
And invites them into the coop, if they please;
Counts and recounts them, but one is gone,
She searches the orchard, the garden, the lawn;
Even in the grass that is deep and wet,
She looks for the place where "Speckle" has set;
Battling the wheat, she calls, coaxingly,
"Ch-neck-e! Ch-neck-e! Ch-neck-e-e!"



V.

In the little white chamber where all is still,
And the roses peep in at their own sweet will,
The young mother sits with a child at her breast,
Tenderly trying to lull it to rest:
Dimpled hands fondle her bosom of snow,
And wet lips press kisses—while she sings low,
"O, hush thee, darling, and go to sleep,
There's time enough—time, dearie—left to weep;
O, hush thee—hush—" she croons, dreamily—
"Hush thee—hush thee—hush thee-e-e!"

ELLA HIGGINSON.

