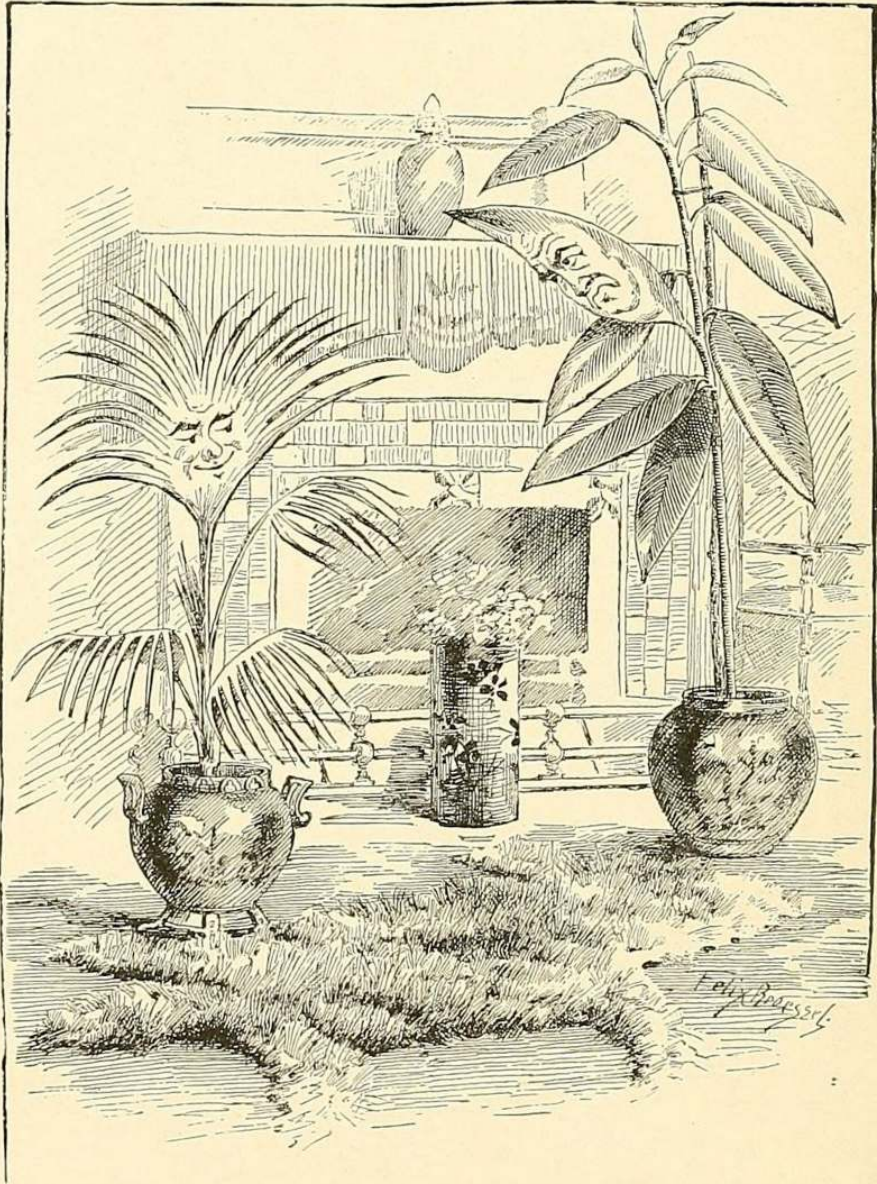




Nancy  
Hanks  
Lincoln  
Public  
Library



The illustration of "The Rubber Plant and the Palm" is given with  
the kind permission of THE CENTURY CO.



# Little Page Fern

And Other Verses

By ✓

Alice Wellington Rollins

NEW YORK

1895



aa'

PS 2734

R3L5

COPYRIGHT, 1895, BY  
ALICE WELLINGTON ROLLINS

Press of J. J. Little & Co.  
Astor Place, New York

## Note.

Many of the verses are new, but the larger part have appeared already in the ST. NICHOLAS, CENTURY, HARPER'S YOUNG PEOPLE, WIDE-AWAKE, THE OUTLOOK, and THE INDEPENDENT. . . . .

To

Sidney,

Who remembered me,

and to

Katharine, Margery, and Dorothy,

Who will not forget.



Beside me at the luncheon-table sat  
A little lad of nine. The gay talk flew  
From lip to lip, of gossip and light chat,  
Till from his forehead back he gently drew,  
With roguish glance, a wandering soft curl,  
And laughing, said, "Oh, I remember you!  
I knew you when you were a little girl!"

We laughed, but he insisted, long ago,  
Somewhere, he knew together we had played.  
He had forgotten what the plays were, though;  
Whether through some fair garden we had strayed,  
Or romped at games in a delirious whirl  
Of frolic; but one memory had staid,  
He knew me when I was a little girl.

And the bright eyes that smiled up into mine  
Assured me we had been in those old days  
Great cronies! Ah, dear little lad of nine,  
I doubt if ever any sweeter praise  
From wiser lips out in the gay world's whirl  
Will come to me than that your young heart pays,  
Remembering when I was a little girl!



## Little Page Fern.

Little Page Fern stood in doublet of green,  
With his message wrapped up in a scroll;  
He kept his head bowed before Summer the Queen,  
While the birds overhead called the roll.

When his turn came, he loyally lifted his head,  
And undid his doublet of green;  
On the scroll he unfurled could distinctly be read  
The message that none had yet seen.

It was neatly set up, in tiny, clear rows  
Of small type, like raised type for the blind;  
Turn over a leaf of the Page, and who knows  
But the secret of Fern Seed you'll find.

## A Nonsense Verse.

The firefly lighted his bicycle lamp,  
And ran down the road for a spin;  
The toadstools pitched their white tents for a camp,  
And tucked their young toads nicely in.

The beautiful stars came out just to see,  
The lovely moon just to be seen;  
But by morning, pray tell me, O where could they be?  
For the world was quite buried in green.

## Wild Rose.

The Wild Rose cable cars stand here and there  
across the lawn,  
With rose-red danger signals floating just above  
the thorn.  
The vine-root cable joining them is just below the  
ground;  
But the cable does the running, while the cars  
stand still, I've found.

## The Circus in the Garden.

The Woodbine climbs a slender pole,  
And waves his arms in air;  
While Honeysuckle Harlequins  
Their motley jackets wear.  
The squirrel swings his light trapeze,  
And springs from bough to bough;  
As Morning Glory tendrils leap  
And catch, to show him how.  
Heliotrope plays cup and ball,  
Juggles like Japanese;  
Tossing his perfume here and there,  
Catching it back with ease.  
Sweet Peas, on tiptoe in a line,  
In pink and white array,  
Stand waiting for a signal, bent  
On dancing their *ballet*.  
The Wind is Circus Master; he  
Comes striding with a will;  
Lashes his whip among the trees,  
To show how he can drill.  
Nasturtiums come in cap and bells,  
And gay, fantastic gowns;

You never 'd think such pretty things  
    Could possibly be clowns.  
No elephant walks through the ring,  
    Jocund; but truth to tell,  
A kitten, stalking through the grass,  
    Suits flowers just as well.  
Aristocrats in velvet, set  
    Closely against the wall,  
The matron Pansies sit and watch  
    With placid face through all.  
But pretty Buds, well chaperoned,  
    By full-blown Blossom *Mère*,  
Bend, smile, coquette, clap little leaves,  
    And toss their heads in air.  
White Balsams, from proscenium box,  
    That is, a window box,  
Lean over, looking calmly down  
    On humbler garden Phlox.  
They dare not laugh, but when the Wind  
    Says funny things, faint whiffs  
Of scent they send down through the air,  
    Waving white handkerchiefs.  
“Standing room only,” heard when late  
    The tardy hollyhocks;

But tall and strong, they did not mind,  
Nor did the Four o'Clocks.  
Gay butterflies and birds and bees  
Hover between the acts,  
Around the belles, (Harebells and Blue,)  
To give Society facts.  
All eye me with distrust, as one  
Who may have come to pick  
Their dainty blossoms here and there,  
And wire them to a stick.  
Yet it was I who hired their tent,  
Paid all their entrance fees,  
Furnished a gardener usher, just  
To give them seats that please.  
Fear not, sweet things! I only wish  
You well, I love you so;—  
Jack Frost will be here by-and-by;—  
Then you may wish to go.

## The Ballad of the Rubber-plant and the Palm.

A Rubber-plant and a small Palm stood  
Upon a parlor floor.  
From either side the fire-place  
They scanned each other o'er.

“What do you rub?” the small Palm asked  
His statelier neighbor tall.

“Alas!” the Rubber-plant replied,  
“I can not rub at all.

“If I had hands, like yours,” he said,  
As wistfully he eyed  
His smaller neighbor's pretty palms  
With fingers opened wide,

“Then I could rub!”—“And yet,” replied  
The little Palm, “you see,  
Though I have hands, I can not rub,  
And that 's the rub, with me.



“ I wonder why it ’s always so:  
That something we have got  
Seems never quite complete to be,  
Without what we have not.

“ I ’ve often longed to rub my hands  
With glee, here in my tub;  
And you, no doubt, have often wished  
You had some hands to rub.

“ Now, if you were I, or I were you,—  
No, that ’s not right, I see,—  
But if you *and* I, were you *or* I,  
What a fine plant we should be! ”

Still, they did as all good plants should—  
Kept green all winter long;  
So no one ever knew or guessed  
That anything was wrong.

## The Bird that never knew He was Caught.

“What *do* you suppose he *can* be at?”

The little bird hopped and hopped  
Around the spot where the artist sat  
At his work, and never stopped.  
Straight to the easel at last he flew;  
Perched on the top without more ado,  
With his quizzical little head on one side,  
He asked (though of fright he nearly died),  
“What *are* you trying to do?”

“I am trying,” the artist politely said,  
“To catch your lineaments, sir.”—  
*Catch!* 't was enough; the little bird fled,  
Fast as he could, with a whiz and a whir,  
Far up to the highest blue.  
And his little laugh floated down as he flew,  
For he cried in derision, “Ha, ha! catch *me!*”  
But, nevertheless, he *was* caught, you see;—  
Here he is, on this page, for you.

## Another Me.

[An answer to Grace Denio Litchfield's poem, "My Other Me," in the ST. NICHOLAS for November.]

O children in the valley,  
Do you ever chance to meet  
A little maid I used to know,  
With lightly tripping feet?

Her name is Alice; and her heart  
Is happy as the day;  
I pray you, greet her kindly,  
If she should cross your way.

But you need n't bring her back to me;  
To tell the truth, you know,  
I have no wish to be again  
That child of long ago.

Of course, it 's lovely to be young,  
Sheltered from heat and cold;  
But let me whisper in your ear:  
"It 's nice, too, to be old."

You see, my lessons all are learned;  
    *Avoir* and *être* I know  
Clear through, subjunctive, *que* and all,  
    That used to bother so.

Geometry I touch no more;  
    And history I read  
Instead of learning it by heart  
    As I had to once, indeed.

It 's true, I don't read fairy tales  
    With quite the zest of yore;  
But then I write them with a zest  
    I never felt before.

Of course, I'm very old; but then,  
    If I wish to play, you see,  
There is up here upon the heights  
    Another little me.

He 's ten years old and he 's a boy;  
    A mischievous young elf;  
But I like him every bit as well  
    As I used to like myself.

You need n't send that little girl,  
Whose heart was full of joy,  
Back to me now; I'd rather keep,  
Instead of her, my boy!

Don't fear to climb, dear children,  
So slowly day by day,  
Out of the happy valley  
Up to the heights away.

I know it 's lovely to be young,  
Sheltered from heat and cold;  
But let me whisper in your ear:  
*"It 's nicer to be old."*

### Hepatica.

So cold it is, the violet ne'er ventures out or stirs;  
But hepaticas come fearlessly, wrapped in their  
dainty furs.

## The Careful Cactus.

The Cactus wisely stores his ample bins  
With choicest juice to last the summer through;  
That when July and August drouth begins,  
He can live still on his own store of dew.

But lest with all his care he be bereft,  
Burglar alarms he sets with careful zeal;  
Small prickly points, in case of idle theft,  
Placed where the careless burglar sets his heel.

They make no noise, it 's true; but there 's no  
need;  
For should the burglar step upon them there,  
He will himself give an alarm indeed,  
And tell you he has found a Prickly Pear.

## A Kansas Nursery.

“ The baby? ” we asked, as with mop and broom,  
Its mother came to the ranch one day;  
“ O! she ’s picketed out across the way!  
I dare not leave her alone in the room! ”

And the busy mother looked for a tub,  
While we saddled our horses, and rode to see  
How the lonely baby fared, while we  
Had borrowed its mother to sweep and scrub.

For the babies we were accustomed to  
Could never have kept their silk and lace,  
And little be-ribboned hats in place,  
With only a tree for their nurse, we knew.

But this Kansas baby had no hat;  
And it looked as if it thought silk and lace  
Would be entirely out of place,  
On a prairie; or, for the matter of that,

Anywhere else. It could only go  
The length of the rope; but its little feet  
Pattered about where the grass was sweet,  
Just as it pleased; and that, you know,

Is more than the city babies do;  
For, trundled under the city trees,  
They go wherever the nurses please,  
Which I should n't like at all; should you?

As I thought it over, it seemed to me  
That a city darling has less to hope,  
Picketed out with invisible rope  
To a somewhat less reliable tree.

### Harvest.

“ You will reap what you sow,” said the wise papa;  
And the wise little boy who heard,  
Said at once, “ Then I'll plant some canary  
seed,  
And perhaps I shall raise a bird.”



## Milkweed.

Now is the time for yachting, and the milkweed  
sets afloat,  
On the blue air flecked with flower foam, its brown  
and tiny boat.  
It sets its white and silken sails, when presto! on  
the wind  
The pretty sails float off themselves and leave the  
boat behind.

But they take with them an anchor, a brown and  
tiny seed;  
And where they light, they find themselves  
anchored like any weed.  
The brown seed grows and grows, and with another  
summer's gales  
New boats float lightly on the air, laden with silken  
sails.

## The Boy Who Was n't There.

Over the Park they run and shout;  
I can see them all from my window here,  
And hear the noise as they rush about,  
And shriek with delight from far and near.

But something I hear above it all—  
A still small voice that is simply dumb,  
Above the clamor of gay base-ball  
Pleads the voice of the boy who could n't come.

I don't know why; perhaps he had meant  
To come and join in the headlong play,  
But was naughty or tore his best new clothes,  
And was sternly informed, "No Park to-day."

Or perhaps he was ill—a little cold  
Or a feverish pulse; and the whole bright day  
Must be spent in the house with grief untold,  
Instead of out in the Park at play.

Or perhaps he lived 'way, 'way down town,  
Four or five miles from the lovely Park,  
Too poor to ride to it, up and down,  
While the uptown boys were out for a lark.

Or perhaps there is n't any such boy;  
Perhaps in that crowd so free from care,  
Rollicking, rushing, shrieking with joy,  
Is every boy who meant to be there.

I hope so. It's nice to hear them shout;  
It does n't seem as if one were dumb;  
And yet my wondering heart goes out  
To the possible boy who could not come.

### Wild Carrot.

Of all Queen Summer's ladies, she  
Has daintiest parasol;  
You could not buy in Paris  
One prettier for a doll.  
A dozen little silken ribs  
Hold everything in place;  
Covered, as for a princess,  
With loveliest white lace.

## Tulip Tree.

The Tulip Tree is cup-bearer, and holds most  
proudly up  
To summer skies and wandering bee its beautiful  
gold cup;  
And when the leaves have fallen, upon the bough  
you'll see  
The small brown hands that held them up still  
reaching from the tree.

## The Humblest.

“ I am so small, you know,” said low  
The dainty violet;  
But she said it wrapped in purple robes  
Like Marie Antoinette.  
“ *Mignonne*, of course; but it is clear,”  
Answered one humbler yet,  
“ That I am lowlier still, my dear;  
For I am *Mignonette*.”

## Columbine.

The Columbine hung down her beautiful head:  
“You see, I can’t blow my own trumpet,” she  
said.

“Why, I’ll blow it for you,” a bee passing by  
Said kindly, and entered her parlor to try.  
There he buzzed, blew, and hummed, such a  
beautiful air!

And honey for money she gave to him there.  
To get what you want, and be generous, too:—  
That ’s a message the bee has, for me and for  
you.

## The Clue.

I ’m not a boy, to know their tastes—  
That certainly is true;  
But I *have* a boy, and that, I think,  
Should give to me a clue.  
And what a boy likes, if I know,  
Is a horse, a dog, and fun;  
A school where discipline is strict,  
And vacation just begun.

## A Noble Scorn.

“I hate pretence!” with a straightforward blink,  
Said a stuffed owl. “Those fellows over there,  
Though hammered out of brass, I’ve no doubt  
think,  
Perched on the andirons that they guard with  
care,  
That they are Owls!”

“I hate pretence!” with two most knowing winks,  
Said a caged owl. “That fellow over there,  
With a glass eye and wire claws, no doubt  
thinks,  
Though from his perch he cannot stir a hair,  
That he’s an Owl!”

“I hate pretence!” past the bright window slinks  
A wild owl. “Now that fellow caged in there,  
With three feet square to move in, no doubt  
thinks,  
Though he has never tasted outdoor air,  
That he’s an Owl!”

## As Others See Us.

In a choice vase of *cloissonné*  
Two peacock feathers tall  
Stirred gently in the summer breeze.  
Above them on the wall,

Two mimic peacock feathers,  
Embroidered with fine care  
In softest silks on velvet rich,  
Moved not in all the air;

With aristocrats' proud calmness,  
And consciousness of ease,  
They watched their little neighbors  
Dance in the summer breeze.

“Quite pretty creatures, really!”  
Their gentle comment rose;  
“But singularly lacking,  
Don't you think, in real repose?”

And the feathers on the table  
Fairly chuckled in their glee:—  
“To think they cannot see we are  
What they make believe to be!”

## Partridge Vine.

The Partridge Vine offers its berries of red,  
With round green leaves for dishes, most temptingly  
spread,  
For birds hungry in winter to come there and feed.  
A bird bit a berry, and out flew a seed,  
That hid itself shyly in earth; but in turn,  
(For true modesty always is willing to learn,)  
Came up a new vine with new berries of red,  
While new birds of next winter came now to be fed.  
A bird brings a berry,—a berry a bird:  
It 's the nicest arrangement I ever have heard.

## The Genius of the Parlor.

What keeps the quiet parlor  
In such beautiful repose?  
It 's the watchful peacock feathers,  
Whose eyelids never close.



## Nuptial Knots.

Poor Daisy, anxious for her fate,  
Counts all her petals o'er;  
But Forget-me-not, with fewer leaves,  
Of hers is always sure.

“*He loves me, loves me not;*”—to count  
Many, is doubtful quite;—

“*Forgets me,—nay, forgets me not,*”  
With four leaves comes out right.

The Daisy dreads her frequent “*not,*”  
Uncertain, as you see;

But Forget-me-not loves hers, which shows  
How different things may be.

## The Bashful Marguerite.

Sweet Marguerite looked shyly from the grass  
Of country fields, and softly whispered: “Here  
I make my home, content; for I,—alas!—  
Am not the rose the city holds so dear.”

Just then, the Queen, driving by chance that way,  
Called to a page: “Bring me that Marguerite;  
I am so tired of roses!”—From that day,  
The daisy had the whole world at her feet.

## Cobweb.

“Will you walk into my parlor?” said the spider  
to the fly

In the good old days. “No, thank you, dear  
spider,” he’d reply.

But nowadays the spider calls her pretty net a  
wheel:

“Just come and try my bicycle!” she cries with  
cunning zeal.

The flattered little fly just can’t refuse; so on  
and in

He steps, to find the spider is the one to take a  
spin.

## Bread Crumbs.

Dear little bird, how could you know,  
As across the Park you flew,  
That over the cruelly frozen ground  
I was scattering crumbs for you?

From a mile away, it seemed to me,  
You saw them over the snow.

What a tiny eye to see so far!

What a wise little heart to know!

How did you know that they were crumbs ?  
And even if that you knew,  
How could you be so happily sure  
That they were crumbs for you ?

Sometimes I think I see beautiful crumbs  
Beyond the snow for me;  
But if I really want to know,  
I must travel over to see.

Sometimes they are crumbs; but nevertheless  
I discover, once over there,  
That they are somebody else's crumbs,  
That I must not even share.

Oh! for those wonderful eyes of yours,  
That can tell just where to go!  
Such a tiny eye to see so far!  
Such a wise little heart to know!

## The Reason Why.

“My dear, what makes your cheeks so red?”

I asked one winter day  
A little boy who came indoors  
To finish up his play.

“Why, don’t you know how cold it is?”

It ’s cold as cold can be;  
And that ’s what makes my cheeks so red;  
I can’t stay out,” said he.

“My dear, what makes your cheeks so red?”

I asked one summer day  
A little girl who came indoors  
To finish up her play.

“Why, don’t you know how hot it is?”

It ’s hot as hot can be;  
And that ’s what makes my cheeks so red;  
I can’t stay out,” said she.

And now, when sometimes I myself,  
Though I am wise and old,  
Do think the day is much too hot  
Or very much too cold,  
I try to think if it were changed,  
Perhaps I might not find  
The weather just the opposite  
A bit more to my mind!

## Reflection.

“ Come see the flag, mamma, here in the lake!  
Red, white, and blue,—the stars, and stripes,  
and all.”

I bend to see the bright reflection fall  
Where the clear waves the mirrored picture take.

“ Of course, it 's not a real flag down there,  
though,”

My little son explains with careful sense  
Of truth exact ; then adds with tone intense,  
“ But somewhere there must be a flag, you know,

Or else this would n't be there.” Then he lifts  
With intuition quick his eager eyes  
To where the “ real flag ” floats in summer  
skies,

While on the lake its mirrored semblance drifts.

So when philosophers with subtle art  
Debate, deny, demand “ Why is it so ? ”  
I answer with my child's “ Somewhere, you  
know,

Must be the truth reflected in my heart.”

## Fertilization.

A Clover blushed shyly, and said, "To a friend  
In the next field, I'd like a short message to send;  
I can't go myself; would you mind, Mr. Bee?"  
(For a bee had just called for his afternoon tea.)  
"Not at all," said the bee; and she wrote a short  
note,  
With pollen for sand, drying fast as she wrote;  
And the bee, fed with honey for tea, said he'd  
take  
Her mail-bag,—or meal-bag,—and not wait for  
cake.  
Then he flew to her friend, made another short call,  
And not knowing its contents, left note, pollen  
and all.  
The note asked for clover seed; quickly it sped,  
Till the field with a great deal more clover was  
spread.  
"Cross-fertilization" the botanists say;  
For the bee flew across, don't you see, on his  
way;  
Though he was n't himself cross a bit, on that  
day.

## A Child's Wisdom.

“ Give us—ah! give us—but Yesterday!”

AUSTIN DOBSON.

Between the half-drawn curtains faintly gleamed  
The early dawn's first pale and glimmering ray;  
But through my heart rang ever, as I dreamed,  
The poet's plaint: “ Give me but Yesterday!”

Through swiftly-opening doors, with flying feet,  
My little daughter with her curls of gold  
Came eagerly the morning sun to greet;—  
The little maid whom yesterday we told

To-morrow, if the skies were not unkind,  
Out into country meadows she should go,  
With beating heart and shining eyes to find  
The sweet, shy haunts of wild flowers, hiding low.

Flushed in the morning light, she danced and  
sang;  
While I forgot the poet's murmuring lay,  
As through the room her sweeter wisdom rang:  
“ Mamma! mamma! To-morrow is To-day!”

## A Gentle Reminder.

Something new about Christmas?

Why, what were half so sweet  
As the old, old way of keeping  
The day our glad hearts greet?

The old, old chimes are dearest;  
The old, old songs are best.  
It 's the old, old gladness welling  
Within each joyous breast.

Then my little lad said slyly,  
“Remember, if that 's true,  
That your old, old way, mamma dear,  
Was to give me something new!”



## To My Boy—On Decoration Day.

If ever the dread day should come again  
When the whole country needs her boys in blue,  
How could I bear, dear lad, among the men  
Marching to war and danger, to see you ?  
My heart sinks as I watch them through the glass;—  
And yet I know one thing were worse to bear:  
That underneath my window they should pass  
And I should look—and find you were not there.







Nancy  
Hanks  
Lincoln  
Public  
Library