

MOTHER GOOSE AS A POET.

In the full choir of poesy there is, or should be, a bird of every feather. Thus we have Burns, Shelley, and Keats, singing like their own thrushes, skylarks, and nightingales; Tennyson, pouring out his notes with the delicate modulations of a trained canary; Byron and Poe, two ravens, croaking, not unmusically, over prospective carrion; Browning, a philosophical owl, prowling about in the shade and turning the heads of plain-thinking people with his inquisitive tu-who's and tu-what's. And among the innumerable warblings and chirpings and twitterings besides, shall there not be a place for the strong, resonant note of an honest every-day fowl like the goose? Let those who cherish a latent prejudice against the homely name remember its high-born connection, the swan, which as every one knows, sings once in its life the most beautiful song in the world. And what is a swan, for all its fine airs and graces, but a goose with a college education?—a sort of new woman goose.

The poems of Mother Goose are easily and naturally arranged into three classes, corresponding to the three classes of people for whom alone it is worth while to write poetry at all,—children, lovers and philosophers.

The first of these classes comprises the nursery rhymes proper. They are sometimes called nonsense verses, because they are popularly considered to be a mere jingle of words, empty of sense, and charged with no higher mission than that of a rattle. If so, it is difficult to account for their hold on the childish imagination; for if agreeable combinations of sounds are all that is required, why is it, in these days of whole schools devoted to the art, that page after page and volume after volume of the most charming nonsense cannot succeed in supplanting the old favorites? Or, if the preference of the children depends largely upon the choice and influence of their parents, why do those elders persist in choosing this particular set of empty jingles? Is not one string of sounding emptiness as good as another?

The late Eugene Field's famous Hush-a-By-Song is a good example of the kind of rhyming nonsense turned out by recent manufacturers. "So, so!" it begins, with the same syllable a