

From HARRIET FYFE
Orcas Island, Washington

A Child's Garden of Verses

by Robert Louis Stevenson

ON THE BOOKSHELF AMONG MY MOST TREASURED VOLUMES is a “loved to pieces” copy of *A Child's Garden of Verses* by Robert Louis Stevenson. Today, I can't say whether it is the poems that I've loved so or the romantic story behind this old and well-read little leather-bound volume. Years ago, it was sent to me by a great-great aunt who was named Harriet. That alone made it special to a little girl because that is my name also. This great-great aunt must have been a collector of special books near the turn of the 20th century, although the exact dates of her life are unknown to me and the book is undated.

The “romantic” part of her story is that she was a doctor and a missionary who traveled by horseback to her patients in the hills of East Tennessee. The longtime family tale is that she carried her Bible in one saddlebag and her doctoring tools in the other. When she retired from her travels, she was so “well loved” herself that all her patients built a log cabin for her permanent home.

My favorite poem in the Garden was “My Shadow” (“I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me”) and I remember playing shadow games because of that wonderful little poem. As I thumb through the pages now, so many years later, I see others that were also favorites and perhaps, really, each and every poem is the best.

The remembrance of this little treasure has prompted a project for next Christmas. Certainly every home should have a copy of *A Child's Garden of Verses*. I don't think I can as yet pass mine on, but I will search for little leather-bound copies for the grandchildren, one of whom is named Halley Harriet.