



ONCE on a time there was a fagot-maker,  
 And he had seven sons.  
 Who could be aught but poor to feed and shelter  
 So many little ones?

For all were merely lads ; not one was able  
 To earn the crust of bread,  
 Though scant it might be, coarse and black and humble,  
 With which he must be fed.

And, worst of all, the youngest one was puny,  
 So odd, and still, and slight,  
 That father, mother, and the other brothers,  
 Thought him not over bright.

So small he was when he was born, so tiny  
 Since then he had become,  
 That — for he was no bigger than your finger —  
 They called him Hop-o'-my-Thumb.

Now at this time, for days and days together,  
 There fell no drop of rain ;  
 The corn shrunk on the stalks ; and in the sunshine  
 Rustled the shriveled grain ;

As if a fire had swept across the meadows  
 They shriveled in the drouth ;  
 And what this meant for the poor fagot-maker  
 Was famine, without doubt.

One night he sat before a smouldering fire,  
 His head bowed down with grief,  
 Trying with those weak wits of his to compass  
 Some scheme for their relief.

His wife above the feeble embers hovered,  
 And wrung her toil-hard hands ;  
 She knew there was no help for their starvation,  
 No hope in making plans.

