

Mary and the robin



'Mistress Mary' is 10 years old and has recently arrived in England from India. She is a lonely little girl and an orphan who has never been to school. When she hears about a secret garden, she is determined to find it.

"Oh!" she cried out, "is it you – is it you?" And it did not seem at all queer to her that she spoke to him as if she were sure that he would understand and answer her.

The robin did answer. He twittered and chirped and hopped along the wall, as if he were telling her all sorts of things. It seemed to Mistress Mary as if she understood him, too, though he was not speaking in words. It was as if he said:

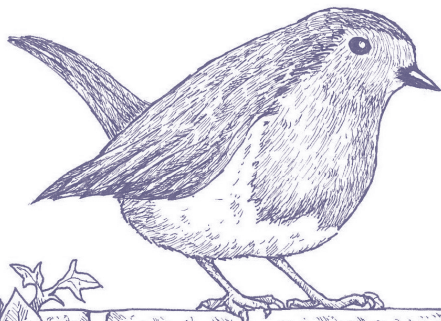
"Good morning! Isn't the wind nice? Isn't the sun nice? Isn't everything nice? Let us both chirp and hop and twitter. Come on! Come on!"

Mary began to laugh, and as he hopped and took little flights along the wall she ran after him. Poor little thin, **sallow**, ugly Mary – she actually looked almost pretty for a moment.

"I like you! I like you!" she cried out, pattering down the walk; and she chirped and tried to whistle, which last she did not know how to do in the least. But the robin seemed to be quite satisfied and chirped and whistled back at her. At last he spread his wings and made a darting flight to the top of a tree, where he perched and sang loudly.

That reminded Mary of the first time she had seen him. He had been swinging on a tree-top then and she had been standing in the **orchard**. Now she was on the other side of the orchard and standing in the path outside a wall – much lower down – and there was the same tree inside.

"It's in the garden no one can go into," she said to herself. "It's the garden without a door."



From *The Secret Garden*
Frances Hodgson Burnett (1849–1924)

Glossary

orchard an area for growing fruit trees, such as apple trees and pear trees

sallow sickly-looking, unhealthy-looking