

[*The London Mercury*]

ALMSWOMEN

BY EDMUND BLUNDEN

At Quincey's moat the squandering
village ends,
And there in the almshouse dwell the
dearest friends
Of all the village, two old dames that
cling
As close as any true loves in the spring.
Long, long ago they passed three-score-
and-ten,
And in this doll's house lived together
then;
All things they have in common being
so poor,
And their one fear, Death's shadow at
the door.
Each sundown makes them mournful,
each sunrise
Brings back the brightness in their
failing eyes.
How happy go the rich fair weather
days
When on the roadside folk stare in
amaze
At such a honeycomb of fruit and
flowers
As mellows round their threshold;
what long hours
They gloat upon their steeping holly-
hocks,
Bee's balsams, feathery southernwood
and stocks,
Fiery dragons'-mouths, great mallow
leaves
For salves, and lemon plants in bushy
sheaves,
Shagged Esau's Hands with five green
finger tips!
Such old sweet names are ever on their
lips.
As pleased as little children where
these grow
In cobbled patterns and worn gowns
they go,
Proud of their wisdom when on goose-
berry shoots
They stuck egg shells to fright from
coming fruits
The brisk-billed rascals; waiting still to
see

Their neighbor owls saunter from tree
to tree

Or in the hushing half-light mouse the
lane

Long-winged and lordly.

But when those hours wane
Indoors they ponder, scared by the
harsh storm

Whose pelting saracens on the window
swarm,

And listen for the mail to clatter past
And church clock's deep bay withering
on the blast;

They feed the fire that flings a freakish
light

On pictured kings and queens gro-
tesquely bright,

Platters and pitchers, faded calendars
And graceful hour-glass trim with
lavenders.

Many a time they kiss and cry, and
pray

Both may be summoned in the self-
same day,

And wiseman linnet tinkling in his cage
End too with them the friendship of
old age,

And all together leave their treasured
room

Some bell-like evening when the May's
in bloom.

[*The Athenæum*]

THE FAR-OFF DAY

BY FREDEGOND SHOVE

Spring will come again;
Hot anxious wind
Shake the window-pane —
Pierce my dead mind —
Wake up the blind —
Tear the roots of trees —
Warm those ponds that freeze —
Bring anemones
To the naked glade,
Crocuses to fill
All the empty shade,
Blow the daffodil,
Call the sheep and fill
The graveyard with ghosts,
Pale and quaking hosts,
Till the living thrill.

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