

[*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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