

The Dangerous Cliff

(a commentary on current medical practice)

By Joseph Malins

'Twas a dangerous cliff, as they freely confessed,
Though to walk near its crest was so pleasant;
But over its terrible edge there had slipped
A Duke and full many a peasant.
The people said something would have to be done,
But their projects did not at all tally;
Some said, "Put a fence 'round the edge of the cliff,"
Some, "An ambulance down in the valley."
The lament of the crowd was profound and loud
As their hearts overflowed with pity.
But the cry for the ambulance carried the day,
As it spread through the neighboring cities.
So a collection was made to accumulate aid
And dwellers in highway and alley,
Gave dollars and cents not to furnish a fence,
But an ambulance down in the valley.
"For the cliff is all right, if you're careful," they said,
"And, if folks even slip and are falling;
It isn't the slipping and falling that hurts them so much
As the shock down below when they're stopping."
So day after day, as these mishaps occurred,
Quick forth would those rescuers sally
To pick up the victims who fell off the cliff,
With their ambulance down in the valley.
Then an old sage remarked: "It's a marvel to me
That people give far more attention

To repairing results than to curing the cause,
When they'd much better aim at prevention.
For the mischief of course should be stopped at
its source;
Come, neighbors and friends, let us rally.
It makes far better sense to rely on a fence
Than an ambulance down in the valley."
"He's wrong in his head," the majority said,
"He would end all our earnest endeavors.
Aren't we picking up folks just as fast as they fall
And giving them care liberally.
Why a redundant fence is of no consequence,
If the ambulance works in the valley."
Now this story seems queer as I've given it here,
But things often occur which are stranger,
More humane we assert to repair the hurt,
Than the plan of removing the danger,
The best possible course would be a safeguard to
source,
And to attend to things rationally.
Yes, let's build up the fence and allow us to
dispense,
With our reliance on these ambulances down in
the valley.

The Touch of the Master's Hand

(one of my favorite spiritual poems)

By Myra Brooks Welch

'Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer
thought it scarcely worth his while
to waste such time on the old violin,
but he held it up with a smile.
"What am I bid, good folks?" he cried.
"Who'll start the bidding for me?"
A dollar, a dollar, now two, only two—
Two dollars and who'll make it three?
Three dollars once, three dollars twice,
Going for three!" — but no!
From the room far back a gray-haired man
came forward and picked up the bow.
Then, wiping the dust from the old violin
and tightening up all the strings,
he played a melody pure and sweet,
as sweet as an angel sings.
The music ceased, and the auctioneer,
with a voice that was quiet and low,
Said, "What am I bid for the old violin?"
and he held it up with the bow.
"A thousand dollars — and who'll make it two?
Two thousand — and who'll make it three?"

Three thousand once, and three thousand twice,
and going and gone!" said he.
The people cheered, but some of them cried,
"We do not quite understand.
What changed its worth?" The man replied:
"The touch of the master's hand!"
And many a man with life out of tune,
and battered and torn with sin,
is auctioned cheap to a thoughtless crowd,
much like the old violin.
A mess of pottage, a glass of wine,
a game — and he travels on.
He's going once, and going twice,
he's going and almost gone!
But the Master comes!
And the foolish crowd
never can quite understand
the worth of a soul
and the change that's wrought
by the touch of the Master's hand.