



'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 many a peasant:
 So 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."

But the cry for the ambulance carried the day,
 For it spread to the neighboring city;
 A fence may be useful or not, it is true,
 But each heart became brimful of pity
 For those who had slipped o'er that dangerous cliff,
 And the dwellers in highway and alley
 Gave a pounds or gave pence, not to put up 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 or are dropping,
 It isn't the slipping that hurts them so much
 As the shock down below -- when they're stopping."
 So day after day when these mishaps occurred,
 Quick forth would the rescuers sally
 To pick up the victims who fell off the cliff,
 With their ambulance down in the valley.

Then an old man remarked: "It's a marvel to me
 That people give far more attention
 To repairing results than to stopping the cause,
 When they'd much better aim at prevention.
 Let us stop at its source all this mischief." cried he,
 "Come, neighbors and friends, let us rally;
 If the cliff we will fence, we might almost dispense
 With the ambulance down in the valley.

"Oh, he's a fanatic," the others rejoined;
 "Dispense with the ambulance? Never!"
 He'd dispense with all charities, too if he could:
 No, No! We'll support them forever.
 Aren't we picking up folks just as fast as they fall?
 And shall this man dictate to us? Shall he?
 Why should people of sense stop to put up a fence
 While their ambulance works in the valley?"

But a sensible few, who are practical, too,
 Will not bear with such nonsense much longer;
 They believe that prevention is better than cure,
 And their party will soon be the stronger.
 Encourage them, then, with your purse, voice and pen,
 And (while other philanthropists dally)
 They will scorn all pretense, and put up a stout fence
 On the cliff that hangs over the valley.