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The Ambulance Down In The Valley

Tw'as 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 was loud,
As their hearts overflowed with their pity;
But the cry for the ambulance carried the day
As it spread through the neighboring city.
A collection was made, to accumulate aid,
And the dwellers in highway and alley
Gave dollars or 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 ever slip and are dropping,
It isn't the slipping that hurts them so much
As the shock down below - when they're stopping."
So for years (we have heard), as these mishaps occurred,
Quick forth would the rescuers sally,
To pick up the victims who fell from the cliff,
With the ambulance down in the valley.

Said one, to his peers, "It's a marvel to me
That you'd give so much greater attention
To repairing results than to curing the cause;
You had much better aim at prevention.
For the mischief, of course, should be stopped at its source,
Come, neighbors and friends, let us rally.
It is far better sense to rely on a fence
Than an ambulance down in the valley."

"He is wrong in his head," the majority said;
"He would end all our earnest endeavor.
He's a man who would shirk his responsible work,
But we will support it forever.
Aren't we picking up all, just as fast as they fall,
And giving them care liberally?
A superfluous fence is of no consequence,
If the ambulance works in the valley.

The story looks queer as we've written it here,
But things oft occur that are stranger;
More humane, we assert, than to succor the hurt
Is the plan of removing the danger,
The best possible course is to safeguard the source;
Attend to things rationally.
Yes, build up the fence and let us dispense
With the ambulance down in the valley.

~ **Joseph Malins**