

# A BALLADE OF BARREN ROSES

BY GERTRUDE BARTLETT

THERE sounds his step receding on the stair,  
The bridegroom's, that my love could not detain,  
For whose captivity the woman's snare  
Of veiled brows, was woven all in vain.  
A rose I held he keeps with tender care.  
Tell him, dear Jesu, that no blossom blows,  
For its own beauty, howsoever rare.  
The Lord of Life loves not a barren rose.

The destiny of roses is to bear  
Their scarlet fruit through drear autumnal rain,  
And hold upon the crystal drifting air  
Of winter days, the cups that pour again  
New springtime loveliness for earth to wear,  
When all the verdure now her bounds inclose  
Is gone forever, lily with the tare.  
For this our Lord loves not a barren rose.

What thought of his is left for me to share,  
Aroused from that rapt dream in which we twain  
Lighted our little lamps of joy, to flare  
Along a single path to Love's domain?  
Will he, in that mysterious region where  
The ruby chalice on his vision glows,  
Exceeding all the stars, remembrance spare  
To one his Lord loves not, a barren rose?

## *Envoy*

Oh, Mystic Rose, the Heart of Jesu, fair  
Creative source from which all beauty flows,  
Ever transfusing Love, hear now my prayer:  
Resume, for love's own sake, one barren rose.

## WHEN STRAITS THEM PRESS

BY RUTH GEORGE

NOWADAYS, we have rather turned the tables upon the peevish adults who, in the last generation, have been used to groan and revolt under the inquisition of their young. For, whereas the growing child, with its 'Why does n't God kill the devil?' or 'Why is baby?' now stands gloriously acquitted, the poor parents who prematurely inquired whether baby loved Jesus or even 'Who made the world?' are held accountable for all the shattered faiths and incredulous spirits of the present age.

Clearly it is not necessary for the lay mind to declare itself further upon the merits or demerits of the Socratic method; certainly it is with no sense of injury that I call up the inquisitors of my own childhood. They were many, of course, as the enemies of the Psalmist — people who asked questions foolish, unnecessary, impossible. But how they goaded my waking inventive faculties to meet, at their best possible, each new emergency!

The emergencies fresh every morning and renewed every evening, were, perhaps, most pressing in that realm of the abstract, the inexact, the guessable — Sabbath school. Once there, and settled in a certain little yellow chair in a front row of little yellow chairs, I think that my most natural reflex to the strident opening-bell, was, perhaps, the formless apprehension that I was now about to be 'stumped,' or the remembrance, with a start, of something that Miss Nellie, our teacher, had told us to do every day

that week. In any case, some sort of heart-searching was sure to be forthcoming: probably I should have to tell whether I had copied at school; or whether I had answered back to mother; or whether I had saved any pennies for the heathen babies. At all events, Miss Nellie would think of something disturbing to ask, and the very sound of the little bell was depressing.

It was all very well — thanks to my provident parents — when she only wanted to know how many in the class had been baptized. Even the interesting task of selecting a besetting sin to vaunt as one's very own was comparatively stimulating and pleasant; indeed, quite a halo hovered about the head of an anæmic little blond who first thought to claim in a childish lisp that her undoing was a Macchiavellian temper. But imagine the shock of being suddenly drawn up by, 'How many of you children remembered to say your prayers this morning?' Imagine having Eleanora Forsythe, your next neighbor, fairly rise off her chair to wave her small gloved hand, while you, the minister's daughter, recalling in dismay your morning's haste to see the new puppies, could only writhe uneasily into an equivocal position which you hoped might be interpreted into a raised hand and then, scarlet with despair and shame, slink into your chair while your cousin Jacky whispered in your ear that you would go to hell. Jacky's full name is John Calvin MacFarlane.