

The Eldest-Born

BY FLORENCE WILKINSON

I WAS a little baby, dead
That earthly morn;
They gave me a white rose to keep;
They sang, "It is not death, but sleep."
She cried, "My eldest-born!"

I was a little spirit then,
Reaching to God;
An eager, ignorant, upward flame.
Cleaving the darkness whence I came,
Tiptoe above the clod.

She cried, "The feet that I have kissed,
Cold in the grave;
The shut mouth, and the eyelids dim—
O God, the marble look of him!"
I, at heaven's architrave,

Trembled, but shrilled aloud, "I come,
O Christ, my brother."
The Beautiful leaned down and smiled:
"Go back to earth, thou little child,
And comfort thy sad mother.

"For when in dreams thou hoverest near,
Gladdening her eyes,
A glimpse of heaven she shall obtain,
And, drinking of her cup of pain,
Thyself shalt be made wise."

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Time washes up along our shore,
A vast calm sea;
And I have learned the weight of tears,
Sin's color, and the length of years,
The stir of things to be.

My brothers win the earthly goal
With toil and stress;
Gone is their infancy divine,
And on their brows is writ the sign
Of earth's forgetfulness.

But God's large moments have made room
Even for this,
That, all unguessed of them, unseen,
Like a slim flower I wave between
And meet my mother's kiss.

She folds me to her lonely heart
At gray of morn;
A little child I am to her.
As in those wondrous days that were,
A babe, her eldest-born.

Belgium's Art Crusade

BY CHARLES MULFORD ROBINSON

HALF a dozen years ago Eugene Broerman, who is still a young man, had gone to Italy to study and to work. Already an artist of marked ability, he hoped, under the inspiration of the works of the old Italian masters, to do much, and he went prepared to work hard. But that was the plan of a man. He fell very ill, and for many long weeks, unable to do any painting, he could only wander about seeing the beauty of which he hoped so much.

"I fell to thinking," he says, "that it was a great pity that so many of the houses were plain rectangles, when a little variety or ornament would have lent so much picturesqueness to some of the streets; and then I began to notice details—the windows, the doors, the signs—in these cities where art had once stood so high, and I felt the pathos of the modern bareness, and amused myself in imagining what might have been."

It all seemed only a sick man's profitless dreaming, until one day Broerman seriously asked himself why such mistakes should be permitted. The more he thought of this, the more he felt the necessity, while there was yet time, of reanimating this degenerated art of the street, of infusing new life into it, that should make it so robust and vigorous that it might perpetuate a worthy memory of our existence.

M. Broerman returned to Brussels, eager to put his idea into effect, that in his own little country at least civic art should come to its own again. The first requisite to its success would be good backing; and Broerman, going personally to prominent men and laying his project and hope before them, secured fifty influential signatures to a paper approving the idea and the plan of a society to foster it. So armed, he interested his artist friends, and a *fête lumineuse*, as he called it, was ar-

ranged in the fine commercial galleries of St.-Hubert at Brussels. It was in April, 1894, that this took place, and that night may be named the birthnight of the remarkable society L'Oeuvre Nationale Belge. Twenty-five thousand persons, at an admission fee of one franc each, passed through the galleries, and in the artists' pictures, of nonsense and of fancy, learned unsuspectingly a first lesson in the new course in public art, and furnished means for the instruction's continuance.

When the fête had closed, the aims of L'Oeuvre were explained in the words which follow:

"To create an emulation among artists, by discovering a practical way in which their works may be inspired with general interest.

"To clothe in an artistic form all that progress has made useful in the public life.

"To transform the streets into picturesque museums comprising various elements of education for the people.

"To restore to art its one-time social mission, by applying it to the modern idea in all the departments controlled by the public authorities."

The idea won its way rapidly. It spread also to other cities than Brussels, gaining so wide a membership that it became a wise act, as well as no more than a fair one, to change the association's title by the insertion of the word "nationale." The final words of the former title were then dropped, and the new one read, "L'Oeuvre Nationale de l'Art appliqué à la Rue." Within a year after the holding of the fête the first class included M. de Bruyn, the Minister of Fine Arts and the chief of the cabinet; M. Schollaert, the Minister of the Interior and of Public Instruction; also the governor of the province of Brabant, the president of his council, the burgomaster of Antwerp, and a num-