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# All My Children

Clifton Holt Jolley

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# All My Children

Clifton Holt Jolley

1.  
If your foreheads curl  
About the peril of pinched  
And purple fingernails  
And hair goes straight against  
A mother's mind for it to twirl  
About bright temples, purling amber  
Past white unworried brows,  
Look here, my little girls:  
I have an appetite for troubled children,  
And hair too plain, and pain  
Of yours; look here,  
My weary, small, spring squirrels:  
I am the oak to all your treasure  
And you the only pleasure  
To my old and wooden bone.

2.  
My sons, like linen on my arm,  
Stars about my narrow forehead,  
Grace upon my common tongue.  
I taste a brilliant calor  
Where the fragile rhythm of a young,  
Unbroken mind has mine  
Inquired, the sacramental stone  
To lie upon and break.  
Fathers father sons  
Just so, and sons, like bread  
On silver—white—have come  
To lie beneath the knife  
And burn to sacrificial form.

3.  
My children make a Patriarchy.  
Like jewels on a priestly gown  
Or petals on an olden tree,  
They speak the final comfort.

Clifton Holt Jolley is an instructor of English at Brigham Young University.