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All My Children

Clifton Holt Jolley

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Jolley: All My Children
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.