A BALLAD OF THE MENDICANTS.

NOT ragged, as in days of old,
    Not footsore and forspent,
Are these, the merry mendicants
    To whom our lives are lent;
In silk and tinsel garmented,
    Tricked out for garish play,
They pass, and passing laugh aloud
    To hear the Givers pray—
They pass, and passing cry aloud,
    Though never sound we hear,
"An alms! An alms! good folk, today,
    For charity and cheer!"

And all they have and all they are
    The Givers gave to them;
The Givers wrought the silken robe
    From collar-band to hem;
The Givers wrought the tinsel crown
    With weariness for goad;
And for their passing nonchalance
    The Givers built the road.

Not humble, as in days of old,
    Contented with a crust,
Nor sick and sad as Lazarus
    Left prone upon the dust,
Our mendicants go daintily
    From banquet hall to bower;
Untroubled by tomorrow's need
    They live their lavish hour;
Untroubled by tomorrow's need
    And debts of yesteryear.
They feast, and feasting, sigh, "Give more,
    For charity and cheer!"

But all the bounty of their board
    The Givers hoarded up,
And for the wine they wallow in
    The Givers hold the cup,
And for the flowers that deck their halls
    The Givers' plants were shorn,
And all the care they have not known
    The Givers' souls have borne.
A BALLAD OF THE MENDICANTS

Not acquiescent in their debt,
    As beggars were of yore,
Who cried a blessing on the wealth
    It served them to implore,
Our mendicants would grace the gift
    Because to them it goes,
And claim the pomp of the poor flower
    Too proud to be a rose!
They claim a myriad gifts of life
    To heart and soul most dear,
And, as their due, they cry, “An alms!
    For charity and cheer!”

But though they fatten all their days
    And leave the Givers lean,
And though they wear a raiment soft
    And leave the Givers mean,
And though they pass on ways made fair
    By those who must endure,
The gift returns to him who gives
    And leaves the beggar poor!

Oh, merry mendicants and mad,
    What solace have ye won,
Who choose a soft and easy thing
    When deeds are to be done?
God’s pity on the cup ye drink,
    The food ye do not earn!
Such banquets do not nourish well,
    Such wine hath power to burn,
God’s pity on the barren life
    That finds the truth with fear
And wakens late to cry, “An alms!
    For charity and cheer.”

For all ye have and all ye are
    The Givers gave to you;
They wrought the Soul ye shall not be,
    By deeds ye did not do;
And though ye feast upon their toil,
    Their health and love today,
Ye die! They live! The gift returns!
    Strength holds to strength alway!

MARGUERITE O. B. WILKINSON.