ALICE MEYNELL

PARENTAGE

“When Augustus Cæsar legislated against the unmarried citizens of Rome, he declared them to be, in some sort, slayers of the people.”

Ah no, not these!
These, who were childless, are not they who gave
So many dead unto the journeying wave,
The helpless nurslings of the cradling seas;
Not they who doomed by infallible decrees
Unnumbered man to the innumerable grave.
But those who slay
Are fathers. Theirs are armies. Death is theirs,
The death of innocences and despairs;
The dying of the golden and the grey.
The sentence, when these speak it, has no Nay.
And she who slays is she who bears, who bears.