

(Charlotte Mew)

The Trees are Down

*—and he cried with a loud voice : ~~Saying~~
Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees—
(Revelation.)*

THEY are cutting down the great plane-trees at the end of the gardens:

For days there has been the grate of the saw, the swish of the branches as they fall,
The crash of trunks, the rustle of trodden leaves,
With the "Whoops" and the "Whoas," the loud common talk, the loud common laughs of the men, above it all.

I remember one evening of a long past Spring
Turning in at a gate, getting out of a cart, and finding a large dead rat in the mud of the drive!

I remember thinking : alive or dead, a rat was a god-forsaken thing,
But at least, in May, that even a rat should be alive.

The week's work here is as good as done. There is just one bough
On the roped bole, in the fine grey rain,
Green and high
And lonely against the sky.
(Down now!—)

And but for that,
If an old dead rat
Did once, for a moment, unmake the Spring, I might never have thought of him again.

It is not for a moment the Spring is unmade to-day ;
These were great trees, it was in them from root to stem :
When the men with the "Whoops" and the "Whoas" have carted
the whole of the whispering loveliness away
Half the Spring, for me, will have gone with them.

It is going now, and my heart has been struck with the hearts of the planes ;

Half my life it has beat with these, in the sun, in the rains,
In the March wind, the May breeze,

In the great gales that came over to them across the roofs from the great seas.

There was only a quiet rain when they were dying ;
They must have heard the sparrows flying,
And the small creeping creatures in the earth where they were lying—

But I, all day, I heard an angel crying :
"Hurt not the trees."

The Knowledgeable Child

I ALWAYS see, I don't know why,
If any person's going to die :

That's why nobody talks to me.
There was a man who came to tea

And when I saw that he would die
I went to him and said, " Good-bye,

I shall not see you any more."
He died that evening. Then, next door,

They had a little girl : she died
Nearly as quick, and Mummy cried

And cried, and ever since that day
She's made me promise not to say.

But folks are still afraid of me,
And, where they've children, nobody

Will let me next nor nigh to them
For fear I'll say good-bye to them.

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