

MODERN ELFLAND

I Cut a staff in a churchyard copse, I clad myself in ragged things, I set a feather in my cap That fell out of an angel's wings.

I filled my wallet with white stones, I took three foxgloves in my hand, I slung my shoes across my back, And so I went to fairyland.

But Lo, within that ancient place Science had reared her iron crown, And the great cloud of steam went up That telleth where she takes a town.

But cowed with smoke and starred with lamps That strange land's light was still its own; The word that witched the woods and hills Spoke in the iron and the stone.

Not Nature's hand had ever curved That mute unearthly porter's spine. Like sleeping dragon's sudden eyes The signals leered along the line.

The chimneys thronging crooked or straight Were fingers signalling the sky; The dog that strayed across the street Seemed four-legged by monstrosity.

'In vain,' I cried, 'though you too touch The new time's desecrating hand, Through all the noises of a town I hear the heart of fairyland.'

I read the name above a door, Then through my spirit pealed and passed: 'This is the town of thine own home, And thou hast looked on it at last.'