

from Sir Charles Dilke

1882

C Dilke Esq.

of Lower Grosvenor Place

London.

MS.

Barry Cornwall

London.

Oh, when I was a little boy,
How often was I told,
Of London & its silver walls
And pavements all of gold,
Of women all so beautiful,
And men so true & bold,
And how all things 'twixt earth & sky
Were therein bought & sold.

And so I came to London:
'Twas on a summer's day,
And I walked at times, & rode at times,
And whistled all the way,
And the blood rushed to my head
When Ben the waggoneer did say -
"Here's London, boy, the queen of towns,
As proud as the sun is gay."

I listened, & I looked about,
And questioned, and - behold!
The walls were not of silver,
The pavement was not gold,
But women - Oh, so beautiful!
And - may I say - so bold
I saw, & Ben said - "All things here
Are to be bought & sold."

And I found they sold the dearest things;
The mother sold her child,
And the sailor sold his life away,
To plough the waters wild,
And the king he sold commissions
To young gentlemen so mild,
And some thieves sold their brother thieves,
Who hanged were or exiled.

And critics sold their paragraphs,
And poets sold their lays,
And great men sold their little men,
With votes of Ays and Nays,
And parsons sold their holy word,
And blessed rich men's ways,
And women sold their love — (for life,
Or only a few days.)

Turn thus with all. For gold bright Art
Her radiant flag unfurled,
And the young rose let its unblown leaves
Be cankered & uncurled;
For gold against the tender heart
The leav's darts were hurled,
And soldiers, whilst Fame's trumpets blow,
Dared death across the world.

And so, farewell to London!
Where men do sell & buy,
All things that are (both good & bad)
Beneath the awful sky;
Where some win wealth, & many want;
Some laugh, & many sigh;
All at last, all folk — from king to clown —
Shut up their books, and — die!

~~And many a woman's hand
Has sold her love for gold!
And many a man's hand
Has sold his soul for gold!~~