

George Eliot (1819-80)

1 Two Lovers

Two lovers by a moss-grown spring:
They leaned soft cheeks together there,
Mingled the dark and sunny hair,
And heard the wooing thrushes sing.
O budding time! 5
O love's blest prime!

Two wedded from the portal step:
The bells made happy carollings,
The air was soft as fanning wings,
White petals on the pathway slept. 10
O pure-eyed bride!
O tender pride!

Two faces o'er a cradle bent:
Two hands above the head were locked;
These pressed each other while they rocked, 15
Those watched a life that love had sent.
O solemn hour!
O hidden power!

Two parents by the evening fire:
The red light fell about their knees, 20
On heads that rose by slow degrees,
Like buds upon the lily spire.
O patient life!
O tender strife!

The two still sat together there, 25
The red light shone about their knees;
But all the heads, by slow degrees,
Had gone and left that lonely pair.
O voyage fast!
O vanished past! 30

The red light shone upon the floor,
And made the space between them wide;
They drew their chairs up side by side,
Their pale cheeks joined, and said, "Once more!"

O memories!

35

O past that is!

1866

(From George Barnett Smith, ed. *Illustrated British Ballads, Old and New*. Vol. 2. London, 1881)