

And the first call from the nest,
That you turn your eyes away from my eyes,
And let me to my rest.”

“Stand up — stand up, Northumberland!
I will that you answer true, 30
If you and your men were quick again,
How would it be with you?”

“Oh, we would speak of hawk and hound,
And the red deer where they rove,
And the merry foxes the country round, 35
And the maidens that we love.

“We would not speak of steel or steed,
Except to grudge the cost;
And he that had done the doughtiest deed
Would mock himself the most. 40

“But I pray you by my keep and tower,
And the tables in my hall,
And I pray you by my lady’s bower
(Ah, bitterest of all!)

“That you lift your eyes from outen my eyes, 45
Your hand from off my breast,
And cover my face from the red sun-rise,
And loose me to my rest!”

She has taken her eyes from out of his eyes —
Her palm from off his breast, 50
And covered his face from the red sun-rise,
And loosed him to his rest.

“Sleep you, or wake, Northumberland —
You shall not speak again,
And the word you have said ’twixt quick and dead 55

I lay on Englishmen.

“So long as Severn runs to West
Or Humber to the East,
That they who bore themselves the best
Shall count themselves the least. 60

“While there is fighting at the ford,
Or flood along the Tweed,
That they shall choose the lesser word
To cloke the greater deed.

“After the quarry and the kill — 65
The fair fight and the fame —
With an ill face and an ill grace
Shall they rehearse the same.

“Greater the deed, greater the need
Lightly to laugh it away, 70
Shall be the mark of the English breed
Until the Judgment Day!”

1929

(From *Rudyard Kipling's Verse*. Definitive edition.
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