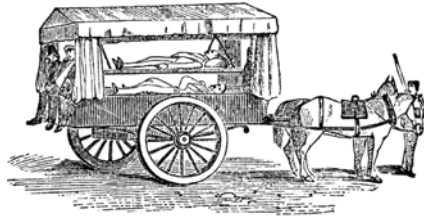


This is a great poem that emphasizes the importance of prevention. It is amazing that it was written in 1895, yet it is so applicable for today.



Fence or Ambulance?

(A Prevention Poem)

by Joseph Malins (1895)

*'Twas a dangerous cliff, as they freely confessed,
Though to walk near its crest was so pleasant;
But over its terrible edge there had slipped
A duke and many a peasant;
So the people said something would have to be done,
But their projects did not at all tally:
Some said, "Put a fence around the edge of the cliff";
Some, "An ambulance down in the valley."*

*But the cry for the ambulance carried the day.
For it spread through the neighboring city:
A fence may be useful or not, it is true,
But each heart became brimful of pity,
For those who slipped over that dangerous cliff,
And the dwellers in highway and alley
Gave pounds or gave pence, not to put up a fence,
But an ambulance down in the valley.*

*"For the cliff is all right if you're careful," they said,
"And if folks even slip and are dropping,
It isn't the slipping that hurts them so much
As the shock down below when they're stopping."
So day after day as those mishaps occurred,
Quick forth would these rescuers sally,
To pick up the victims who fell off the cliff,
With the ambulance down in the valley.*



*Then an old sage remarked, "It's a marvel to me
That people give far more attention
To repairing results than to stopping the cause,
When they'd much better aim at prevention.
Let us stop at its source all this mischief," cried he;
"Come, neighbors and friends, let us rally;
If the cliff we will fence,
We might almost dispense
With the ambulance down in the valley.
"*



*"Oh, he's a fanatic," the others rejoined:
"Dispense with the ambulance? Never!
He'd dispense with all charities too if he could.
No, no! We'll support them forever.
Aren't we picking up folks just as fast as they fall?
And shall this man dictate to us? Shall he?
Why should people of sense stop to put up a fence
While their ambulance works in the valley?"*

*But a sensible few, who are practical too,
Will not bear with such nonsense much longer.
They believe that prevention is better than cure;
And their party will soon be the stronger.
Encourage them, then, with your purse, voice, and pen,
And (while other philanthropists dally),
They will scorn all pretense and put a stout fence
On the cliff that hangs over the valley.*



Taken from:

The Best Loved Poems of the American People
Compiled by Hazel Felleman
Published by Doubleday, 1936
(artwork added)