



# Childhood

I used to think that grown-up people chose  
To have stiff backs and wrinkles round their nose,  
And veins like small fat snakes on either hand,  
On purpose of be grand.  
Till through the banisters I watched one day  
My great-aunt Etty's friend who was going away,  
And how her onyx beads had come unstrung.  
I saw her grope to find them as they rolled ;  
And then I knew that she was helplessly old,  
As I was helplessly young.

*Frances Cornford*

*from "Who do you think you are ?" Poems about People, editor D. Woolgar, reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press*