

## *Homes*

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We are the smiling comfortable homes  
With happy families enthroned therein,  
Where baby souls are brought to meet the world,  
Where women end their duties and desires,  
For which men labor as the goal of life,  
That people worship now instead of God.

Do we not teach the child to worship God?—  
Whose soul's young range is bounded by the homes  
Of those he loves, and where he learns that life  
Is all constrained to serve the wants therein,  
Domestic needs and personal desires,—  
These are the early limits of his world.

Shall not the soul's most measureless desires  
Learn that the very flower and fruit of life  
Lies all attained in comfortable homes,  
With which life's purpose is to dot the world  
And consummate the utmost will of God,  
By sitting down to eat and drink therein.

Yea, in the processes that work therein—  
Fulfilment of our natural desires—  
Surely man finds the proof that mighty God  
For to maintain and reproduce his life  
Created him and set him in the world;  
And this high end is best attained in homes.

Are we not homes? And is not all therein?  
Wring dry the world to meet our wide desires!  
We crown all life! We are the aim of God!

IF YOU'VE never read it before, the lofty, antiquated style of *Homes* might make you think the author really does think homes are super great. But the high style is all part of its withering sarcasm. In its satire, the poem brings clarity to the ways in which conservative people idolize domestic life. The form used—the *sestina*—is quite strict: each stanza must contain six lines of five feet. The lines must end with the same set of six words, in a specific pattern that changes every stanza. These six words must also be used in the middle and endings of the three lines that make up the closing stanza.