

**FACTORY  
AND  
FIRESIDE**

(A collection of poems)

by

**J. WILLIAM JONES**

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**60p**

J. William Jones was born in Coseley, and attended school there. After a further two years at a private school he commenced work with Joseph Sankey and Sons. At the age of eighteen he was conscripted into the army. He took part in the Normandy landings in 1944 with the 21st Beach Ordnance Detachment, and after further service in Europe he spent over two years in India and Ceylon and attained the rank of Warrant Officer. After the war he returned to Sankeys and was trained in works management. In 1955 he left industry to join the Local Government service where he trained as an administrative officer. He is now employed in education administration.

'Jim' Jones is a qualified teacher of speech and drama and was for many years a member of a well-known amateur dramatic society, with whom he served as actor and producer. A widely published writer, he has lectured on poetry and creative writing at Compton Grange and the Adult College, Wolverhampton. In 1961 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He is a governor of a local secondary school, and an active member of the Methodist Church. He is married and has three children.

Since the early 1970s he has become a regular broadcaster on BBC radio and has also appeared on television in a programme based on one of his poems. A member of The Black Country Society, he identifies himself with its aims and activities, and has additionally taken over the organisation of the Dudley Poetry Centre, a branch of West Midland Arts, being responsible for monthly meetings and the appearance of poets of national and international fame.

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Harold and Joan Parsons  
for their help and encouragement over the years

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FIRESIDE

The author wishes to thank The Black Country Society for making the publication of these verses possible.

The author is indebted to Mrs. F. Field, of Lower Gornal, for the loan of the typeset by J. Williams Jones for this

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FROM ORDER THE SMOKE  
(Out of print)  
A BLACK COUNTRY SOCIETY PUBLICATION

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Also by J. William Jones

“FROM UNDER THE SMOKE”

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## FOREWORD

*The Black Country is unique. Nowhere in the world were the raw materials for the making of iron packed so closely together as in the Black Country*

*The raw material of the English language is Anglo-Saxon and nowhere in England are Anglo-Saxon words packed so closely together as in Black Country dialect. The supply of natural resources has now ceased but not the supply of words, and with words as his raw materials and with sincerity and imagination as his flux, Jim William Jones has produced ingots of poetry as strong, as durable and as perfect as the ingots of iron for which the Black Country was famous.*

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Poor lifeless shell,  
Spilling out dust,  
Fragments of your past,  
Caught up by the wind  
And carried away.

We stand and stare,  
Through the dark cavity  
Of your eye, searching  
For the faded years, hoping  
For some faint glimmer  
Of what we were,  
To manifest itself  
In your darkening walls,  
Or cross this shattered floor,  
To creak through warped doors,  
Now held in wedged silence.

## DEMOLITION

IN

## PROGRESS

We were your life,  
I, my wife, our children.  
We filled your arteries  
With our vitality.  
You were strong then;  
Your eyes bright gold,  
Your mouth mobile  
With warm hospitality,  
Each path a tongue  
Of flowered invitation.

We too, have faded  
With the years; we  
Have now become your soul  
Detached from your body,  
Watching the final scene  
Of your extinction;  
As, one day, our souls  
Will stand, outside ourselves  
And stare, wistfully perhaps,  
At our own destruction,  
Remembering a whole lifetime—  
In a quick fall of dust.

## THE POPPY

Red target of blood  
Taking the sting in its eye  
Sees the striped hunter  
Making a pattern on the sun.  
Watches the deep moving  
Flow of forests  
Washing the desert green,  
And the water of grey rocks  
Splashing sources into rivers.  
Here come the mountains  
Marching up the world  
Cutting shreds of white cloud  
To wipe their footprints,  
And the valleys cry with heat.  
In the doorways of roses  
Bees grope and grumble;  
The brook has no water  
To drink. Horses prance  
And know not why. Flies  
Zoom and dive over dry dung;  
Thirsty dogs wilt and urinate  
Coughing up wet dust.  
Summer smells of mint  
And beef roasting on spits,  
Perfume of women,  
Sweat held in cotton,  
And the twinge of tar  
On wilting roadways.  
In the long sweet grass  
Lovers hide and seek,  
Learning the slow language  
Of the green earth.  
And the somnolent poppy  
From its opiate depths,  
Sighs in recognition,  
Of their magnificent joy.

## 'EARTS AN' PLAIRCES

(Dedicated to my father)

When ar wuz a'cumin' from Tippon  
Ter Dudley th t'other day,  
Ar sid the plairce wheer ar met 'er,  
Mar luvly yung Mary May.

The fact'ry wuz all of a shambles,  
The windas all smoshed an' black.  
Ar peeped in, an' looked fer me memories,  
An' one er tew cum creepin' back.

Ar sid me ode mates theer a'lloodin'  
The lorry an' th'ode green van,  
An' fat "'Arry Cabbige" the foreman,  
A'swiggin' coed tay from 'is can.

Ar sid the sun shine threw the skylights,  
A'meckin' gold dust on the floer,  
An' Mary May cum down the fact'ry,  
An' in threw the office dooer.

'Er 'air wuz the colour o' copper,  
'Er fairce like a luvly ripe peach,  
An' ar'm damned if me 'ond dae goo gropin'  
But 'er wuz a ghost out o' reach.

Ar called tew 'er, saft like an' barmy,  
Me mem'ries a'teckin' me in.  
A woman who walked by wi' shappin'  
Gid me a black look 'ard as sin.



Then Mary May walked up the fact'ry,  
'Er figure all shairply an' fine.  
Me 'eart lep' up 'eavy inside me,  
Ter think when 'er fust become mine.

The thrill o' them days never leaves me,  
An' never wull while this plairce stonds,  
The day when ar fust cum ter kiss 'er  
An' ode 'er ser close in me 'onds.

The fact'ry is desolate an' closed now,  
Wi' never a sound onywhere.  
The plairce wheer 'er walked, an' the office,  
Am littered wi' junk an' ode gear.

Ar wished ar cud goo back ter them days,  
Ter luv an' be 'appy agen,  
Ter loff wi' me mates like ar yewsta,  
But theer's no gooin' back, soo they sen.

One day p'raps, if ar goo t'heaven,  
Ar'll aks 'em if they'll let me stray,  
An' goo fer a stroll in the fact'ry,  
Wi' luvly yung Mary May.

It wo' be the sairme then tho', mindja,  
Ode ghosts aye got 'earts an' cor luv,  
Them bein' no mooer than grey shaddas,  
Wot passin' like clouds up above.

Theer's plairces wot pullin' we 'eart strings,  
An' tek us back monny a day;  
This ode plairce twix' Tippon an' Dudley,  
Reminds me o' yung Mary May.

Ar reckon theer's plairces all ower,  
Wot 'o'din a mem'ry ter last,  
The funniest, crummiest plairces,  
Wheer bits o' folks 'earts clingin' fast.



Ar'd like ter tell Mary about this,  
But 'er's lost all feelin' wi' time.  
It's funny 'ow time teks the gloss off,  
An' meks romance almost a crime.

They say luv grows coed as the years pass,  
We bodies cewl down, ar serpose,  
But thank God we keepin' we mem'ries,  
Ter sairve we from gooin' merose.

---

### SUNNY CORNER

The sun's huge gold  
Spreads and dries  
On the crumbling wall,  
Transfixing dusty flies  
Into a mad still-life  
Of warm ecstasy.  
Velvet lips of wallflowers  
Puff their holiday scent  
Into the humming air  
Where swaggering sunflowers  
Tower against the sky;  
And I lie low  
In my deckchair, beatifically  
Smoking a rusty pipe,  
Savouring the beauty  
Of that vivid corner  
Brought to life by my hand.

These plants do not know me  
Or see, or understand  
My function here,  
And yet, suddenly,  
A solitary dandelion,  
Having escaped my hoeing,  
Peers out from a clump of grass,  
Fixing me with its yellow stare,  
As if comprehending.

## AIR DEW, ODE TREE

Air dew, ode tree!  
Remember me?  
It's manny a year  
Since ar cum down 'ere  
Wi' a wench by me side,  
When the sky wuz wide  
An' all life seemed free.  
Remember me?  
'Ow ar yewsta be,  
When ar brought 'er down  
From the smoky town,  
An' we'd walk up 'ere  
Where the air wuz clear  
An' we'd loff an' love  
Till the sky above  
Turned hard as flint  
Wi' the diamond glint  
Of a summer sun.  
Then we'd seek your shade,  
In this lovely glade,  
An' lie full length,  
Under the cewl strength  
Of your great boughs.  
Sometimes we'd stay  
Till the summer day  
Bairned itself out  
In a vivid spout  
Of molton fire.  
Sometimes we'd tire  
An' drap off ter sleep,  
An' night 'ud creep  
Wi' its shadowy tread  
Until over'ead

The mewn 'ud roll  
Like a silver bubble  
In a giant bowl.  
Oh! ar sigh, ode tree!  
An' ar cry, ode tree!  
Fer days that are gone  
When all life shone  
Wi' the glow o' youth  
An' ter tell the truth  
'Tween yo' an' me,  
It's now ar see,  
Now ar'm gerrin' ode  
An ar' feel the coed,  
That them days wun sweet;  
But life doe repeat  
Its best treasure  
In the sairme measure  
Or the sairme way  
As it did yesterday.  
Mar wench 'as gone  
An' ar'm a'waitin' on  
The call ter tek me 'ook,  
Bur' ar jus' thought ar'd look  
One moore time, ode tree  
At wot yewsta be  
When yo' an' me  
Wun that bit yunger.  
But yo' get strunger  
As the years roll on  
While mar strength's all gone.  
Remember this, ode tree?  
This stick wot steadies me,  
Ar broke from yo' one day  
When life wuz gay;  
Oh 'ow yo' sighed!  
Oh 'ow the wind cried!  
Sigh now, ode tree,  
Sigh once moore fer me!  
Ar shonna cum agen this way,  
Remember me some other day  
When the sun mounts high  
In a summer sky.  
Remember me!



## GAIRBRIEL FROM GORNAL

Ar'm thinking o' Gairbriel,  
Gairbriel from Gornal,  
The chap as wairked by me  
At the coal fairce below.  
'E dae dew much talkin'  
About wheer 'e cum from,  
'Is fam'ly, 'is life.  
Kep' 'isself to 'isself.

Just a quiet chap ar thought 'im,  
Gairbriel from Gornal,  
A'airnin' 'is livin',  
Never botherin' wi' none,  
Till one day it 'appened.  
Down theer at the coal fairce,  
The rewf timbers groaned,  
An' the stoones spluttered down.

Then up springs this Gairbriel,  
Gairbriel from Gornal,  
'E props 'is great shoulders  
Wheer the rewf threatened me,  
"Gerrout, yer saft gawbee!"  
Says 'e, "Yo' got childrin!  
Ar doe mind a'dyin',  
'Cos theer'll nob'dy mourn me."

Ar dae try ter stop 'im,  
Gairbriel from Gornal,  
'Cos ar wuz a coward,  
An' ar run fer me life.  
Ar run an' ar stumbled,  
The blind fear wuz on me.  
Ar thought o' me childrin,  
An' ar thought o' me wife.



Now ar think about Gairbriel,  
Gairbriel from Gornal,  
A'lyin' theer smothered  
Moore than 'arf a mile down.  
An' ar calls 'im softly  
In me 'eart ar calls 'im,  
"Yo'n got some'dy wot mourns yer  
Me ode mairte—yo' got me!"

---

CLOUD  
PICTURE

A man lies crushed  
Beneath a grey rock;  
On top, a scorpion,  
Tail poised to strike  
Lurks in the sun.  
Wisps of golden smoke  
Curve from the pipe  
Of a bearded god  
Who rides in splendour  
Trailing his white feet  
In a mush of snow.  
Now the grey rock moves  
And splits down its length  
Disintegrating;  
The crushed man contorts  
In its explosion.  
The golden god wilts,  
His beard flaking out  
Making him faceless.  
Pink flame radiates  
From strange fires within;  
The cloud picture crumbles,  
Drifting hopelessly  
Into the roaring sun.  
Only the scorpion,  
Heraldic in gold,  
Remains indestructible  
Tail poised to strike.

We'm paperin' the walls again,  
It's tew years since the last,  
An' goodness knows 'ow many patterns  
Since we did the fust.

Squares an' stripes an' circles,  
Flowers, leaves an' grass,  
Ar wonder what the pattern'll be,  
When my end comes ter pass.

Our carpet's gettin' very thin;  
The colours start ter fade.  
My oldest son wuz a babe in arms  
When we 'ad it laid.

Red an' green an' floral,  
Symbols straight an' curled,  
Ar wonder wot the pattern'll be  
When mar feet leave this wairld.

## PATTERNS

## AND

## COLOURS

We'm paintin' all the dooers again,  
This time we've chosen white.  
It blends in wi' the rest of our scheme  
An' brings in some light.

Colours like the rainbow,  
Some as dark as soot,  
Ar wonder what the colour'll be  
When mar life's dooer slams shut.

This wairld has changed a tew-three times  
Along its cosmic way,  
From bright-starred times o' goodness and  
peace  
To years o' coldest grey.

Pain an' death an' warfare,  
Filth an' greed an' lust.  
Ar wonder if the pattern'll change  
Before this wairld goz bust.

## TH'ARD STUFF

I 'ad a body strung an' fairm,  
The blewm wuz on me cheek.  
Ar walked wi' shoulders square an' broad,  
Blokcs praised mar fine physique.

Ar'd run a rairce or bend a bar,  
Or jump a fence with ease.  
Ar sum strong waitrers o' the sae,  
An' clumbed the 'ighest trees.

One day, a day o' dewm fer me,  
Ar went out on a spree,  
An' tairsted th'ard stuff, 'arsh an' warm;  
Its fyer sewn collared me.

Its fyer, soo crafty, bairned me brain,  
Ar crairved ter feel its 'eat;  
Ar drunk it wet, ar drunk it dry,  
Till th'ard stuff rewled me feet.

It rewled me feet, it rewled me brain,  
Ar lost all sense o' shairme.  
Me fam'ly cried, the neighbours sneered,  
Me life become a gairme.

One day, while bewsin' up the town,  
Ar met a mairte ar'd knowed.  
'E 'urried by wi'out a waird  
On th'other side o' the road.

Then anger rose up in me 'eart;  
Ar run an' grabbed 'is coot.  
Ar clouted 'im across the yed,  
An' shook 'im be the throat.

They put me in a coed dark cell,  
"Ter cewl yer dahn!" they said,  
While time tairned roun' the crazy hours  
An' thundered in me yed.



Ar chairfed in that coed dismal cell,  
Fer ten lung weary days.  
The fyer bairned out ter coed grey ash,  
An' lef' me in a maize.

Inside that coed an' dismal cell,  
Ar fun' meself agen.  
Ar yairned fer clean strung 'ealthy days,  
When ar walked tall wi' men.

Ar kneeled down on that empty flooer,  
An' damned if ar dae pray.  
God must've 'eered me in that cell,  
An' rid me o' dismay.

An' now, once moore ar'm feelin' strung;  
The blewm's back on me cheek.  
Ar walk wi' shoulders square an' broad;  
Blokos prairse me fine physique.

Now, all yo' yung chaps, fine an' strung,  
Ar've toed abaht meself.  
If yo' doe want ter get like me,  
Leave th'ard stuff on the shelf.

An' this applies tew annythin'  
Wot's gooin' ter spile yer 'ealth,  
'Cos lot's o' things wot seemin' great,  
Con dew yer 'arm by stealth.

Yo' might think yo'm a clever sort,  
Wot cor be med a fewl.  
Bur' all yo' need is one good sip,  
An' yo'll become a tewl.

It's th'easiest thing in all this wairld,  
Ter slip off the right track,  
But th'ardest stuff of all, me lads,  
Is a'strivin' ter get back.



## LAMENT

(By a fella who was a 'Night-Sile' mon abaht 1926)

Up dahn the back o' the Cracker Mill,  
Wuz a drap dahn cot, bur' it aye theer still,  
Wheer ar yewsta live wi' me wife an' kid,  
An' nob'dy knows the trubble ar sid,  
In them fer off times when ar did that job,  
Fer a paltry wairge of a tew-three bob.  
Wi' me clo'es all stinkin'; an' a rackin' cuff;  
An' manny's the time as ar've 'ad enuff,  
An' vowed as ar'd pack the dahn job in,  
Bur' ar'd look at me wife ser pale an' thin,  
An' me kid, wi' 'ardly enuff tew ate,  
Soo ar'd jus' resign meself ter me fate,  
An' goo out agen on me night-sile job,  
Fer a paltry wairge of a tew-three bob.

In them days yo' cudna pick an' chewse,  
Yo' cudna win soo yo' 'a' ta lewse.  
If yo' dae tek wot jobs wun knockin' aroun',  
Yo'd suen find yersel' lyin' undergroun'.  
Soo when the night-sile job crop' up,  
Ar wuz glad ter tek it ter pay fer sup  
An' fittle: we'd neely cum ter th'end,  
Me missus wuz gooin' roun' the bend.  
The kid wuz theer; a luvly gairl,  
An' them wun the ones ar cudna fairl.  
Soo ar took a job as suen tairned me sick;  
'Cus yo' cudna chewse an' yo' cudna pick.  
An' ar'd goo in the dark on me night-sile job,  
Fer a paltry wairge of a tew-three bob.

Ar never felt clain tho' ar washed an' washed,  
Me spirit wuz broke an' me 'opes wun dashed.  
But when ar'd get 'um—tho' ar stunk ser bad,  
Me daughter 'ud kiss me an' say, " 'Ere's ower dad!"

Theer wuz 'eaven in me life wi' me wife an' me kid,  
But nob'dy knows all the trubble ar sid,  
In them far off days when ar did that job,  
Fer a paltry wairge of a tew-three bob.  
One night, ar remember, ar'd gone on the roun',  
When a copper cum runnin' an' said "Glad yo'm foun'!  
It's yer little wench—'er's took bad ar fear."  
Ar run all the way drappin' manny a tear;  
'Er died in me arms jus' afower it broke day,  
An' the mornin' breeze took 'er spirit away.

Ar guess the las' thoughts as 'er'd 'ave of 'er dad,  
Wuz a bloke alliz dairty, an' stinkin' ser bad,  
An' at night ar'd look up at the stars in the sky,  
Ser coed an' ser bright, an' soo terribly 'igh,  
An' ar'd think 'ow 'er soul 'ud be shinin' up theer,  
Away from the dairt an' the stinks o' dahn 'ere,  
Wheer men 'a' ter grovel in muck fer theyre bread,  
Or starve on the lairbour until they wun jed.  
Me cuff got wuss wi' the shock o' me loss,  
An' ar'd goo out a'gaspin' like some ode 'oss,  
Bur ar cudna goo sick from me night-sile job,  
Wor' ar did fer a paltry tew-three bob.  
Then ter cap it all me poor missus took bad,  
'Er died, an' lef' me all lonely an' sad.

Up dahn the back o' the Cracker Mill,  
Wuz a drap dahn cot, bur' it aye theer still,  
On'y land overgrewed wi' weeds an' grass,  
An' if ar goo up theer ar conna pass,  
Wi'out stoppin' a minute an' drappin' a tear,  
Fer them far off days, when ar lived up 'ere,  
Wi' me little wench, an' me poor dear wife,  
As never knowed nothin' but trubble an' strife.  
Now ar'm much better off ner ar yewsta be,  
When ar wuz a night-sile mon, dust see,  
Ar've manijed ter live ter be seventy-five,  
An' ar'm shewerly lucky ter be alive.  
Ter see these 'ere days o' the welfare stairte,  
Wheer yo' doe 'a' ter goo short o' summat t'airte.



Yet theer's manny a mon in the wairld terday,  
As thinks 'e's 'ard dun tew, an' strikes fer moorer pay;  
They doe know they'm born; tho' some dew it fer spite,  
'Cos some am jus' enimies of England, that's right!  
But these days they need ter be thankful, air kid,  
'Cos none on 'em's knowed the trubble's ar've sid,  
In them far-off days when ar did that job,  
Fer a paltry wairge of a tew-three bob.  
Yo tek Billy Bairker wot clains out the suff,  
'E's one o' the fewls o' this wairld right enuff,  
Bur' e's gor' a big 'ouse, an' a nice lickle car,  
An' when 'e goz out 'e's dressed better be far,  
Than manny a bloke wot's got brains in 'is yed,  
But Bill's alliz grumblin'—IT MEKS ME SEE RED!

---

## OFFICE BLUES

When driven sleet smacks window panes  
And trees grow spectral in the lanes,  
When labourers blow on fingers blue,  
And drivers curse the skidding queue,  
It's then I like my office, warm,  
With windows sealed against the storm.

But when Spring's first warm flush appears  
And bird-song captivates and cheers,  
When up into the unfathomed blue  
A polished sun climbs bright and new,  
I then would quit this snug abode  
And join those labourers in the road.



## TUNDISH AN' CUSTARD

Ar'll tell yer the tairle of a custard pie,  
An' the trubble ar gor' intew threw it.  
The thing as ar did wuz a nine-day crime,  
Bur' them other chaps med me dew it.

Ar wuz office biy at the rollin' mill,  
An' as 'appy as ar cud be.  
The chaps as wuz theer then wun loffin' all day  
Wi' the tricks wot they played on me.  
They aksed me if ar knowed the "tundish trick,"  
An' ar toed 'em as no ar dae,  
Soo one on 'em nairme o' Darby,  
Says, "Right, well yo' dun it this way!"  
Then 'e stuck a big tundish down 'is pants,  
An' wiggled a coin off 'is nose,  
Till it drapped in the blewmin' tundish;  
It wuz clever ar suppose!

Then ar stuck the tundish down mar pants,  
An' a penny on th'end o' me conk,  
But while ar wuz wigglin', saft as yer like,  
They powered wairter down coed an' ronk;  
I 'a' ter goo'n 'ide mesel' fer an hour,  
While they put me trousers ter dry,  
But they bought me a bag o' pear-draps,  
Fer bein' a very good biy.  
Now these wun the things as they yewsta dew,  
Ter mek life a lickle bit bright.  
Theer's moost on 'em jed now, an' sleepin',  
The sleep o' the lung coed night.

The custard pies wun as big as me yed;  
Me mouth waiters now when ar think,  
O' that Chris'mass party an' all the good fun,  
An' the mountains o' fittle an' drink;

They laid the stuff out in the wairges rewm,  
Wot looked out ont a the yard.  
The wind whistled by wi' the snow on its tail,  
An' the puddles o' wairter froze 'ard.  
'Big Bull' the wairks p'liceman wuz standin' theer,  
In 'is yewniform all nairvy blew,  
A'blowin' an' swingin' 'is arms about,  
As tho' 'e wuz frozen right threw.

"Now watch 'im!" says Darby, "It wo' be lung,  
When we opens we whisky an' beer,  
'E'll cum scrawlin' ower as brairzen as 'ell,  
An' say 'Wot's a'gooin' on 'ere?'  
A'thinkin' we'n gie 'im a swig o' we bewse,  
An' some 'am an' a big custard pie,  
But yo' mun bide 'ere wi' one clapped in yer 'ond,  
An' gie it 'im right in the eye!"  
"But wot sholl ar dew?" ar says "Ar'll gerra clout,  
'E's a tew-three times bigger ner me!"  
"Due werrit!" says Darby, "we'n put things alright,  
Just chuck it—then leave things ter we!"

The party got gooin', the bottles wun tapped,  
The rewm seemed tew small fer 'em all,  
It wor very lung fower they bust inta sung,  
An' they dae pay no 'eed ter the call.  
Bur' ar'd got me custard pie ready ter chuck,  
When a vice said "Wot's goin' on 'ere?"  
An' ar chucked it quick—then ar went proper sick,  
When ar sid who wuz standin' theer;  
Ower gaffer wuz one o' these special p'lice blokes,  
But a officer up very 'igh,  
Wi' things on 'is shoulders—all crowns an' the like,  
An' 'e dae like that big custard pie!

Bur' 'ow did ar know as 'e'd tairn up like that,  
In 'is yewniform all nairvy blew;  
'E oughta a' toed we as 'e'd cum dressed up  
All ready ter goo ter some dew.  
Anyroad, theer 'e stood jus' as tho' 'e'd bin shot,  
An' wi' custard all ower 'is fairce,  
A'drippin, an' sloppin' an' drappin' about,  
In ev'ry conceivable plairce.



Now Darby an' th'others 'ad 'ad that much bewse,  
They jus' kep' singin' an' loffin',  
While ar jus' stood theer, feelin' terrible queer,  
An' feelin' the nairls in me coffin.

Suen after, the gaffer, 'e sent out fer me,  
An' ar went in wi' knees jus' like jally,  
'E sot theer an' stared at me 'ard fer a bit,  
While the fear rumbled round in me bally.  
Ar stammered an' toed 'im ow sorry ar was,  
An' said 'ow it all cum about,  
Then 'e cussed an' said "Don't let it 'appen agen,  
Or ar'll kick all the lot of you out!"  
Now Darby an' th'others 'ad all bin chalked off,  
An' when ar got back—theer an' then,  
They med me dew that blewmin' tundish trick  
**ALL OWER AN' OWER AGEN!**



## LICKLE BILLY'S BLACKBAIRD

Now Billy wuz on'y abaht five-foot-five,  
Which is small fer a Blackcountry mon,  
Bur' 'e cud tairn sile like a bloke twice 'is strength,  
An' 'is gardin wuz second ter none.  
Wi' a rockery up the one corner,  
Luvly roses all dahn either side,  
An' tairters an' cabbige an' passnips an' stuff,  
In the middle patch twenty yards wide.

One day 'e wuz diggin' this middle patch,  
When a blackbaird all shiny an' sleek,  
Dropped dahn from the sky on the rich dark sile,  
Fer ter dig aht the wairms wi' 'is beak.  
"Air dew!" Lickle Billy said, "wotcha want?"  
An' the blackbaird looked up an' said, "Squark!"  
From then on that blackbaird an' Billy wun friends,  
An' they'd meet ev'ry day fer a talk.

The bright flairmes o' spring tairned ter summer's glow.  
Billy's gardin—it crackled wi' life.  
'E'd sit in the shairde talkin' tew the blackbaird,  
Which cud cant, 'e said, moore than 'is wife.  
They talked abaht gardins an' fittle,  
Which wun subjects they booth fairvoured moost,  
Then Billy 'e'd fatch aht some treats fer 'is mairte,  
Like fat baircon sords, cairke crumbs an' toast.

Now Billy's wife thought as 'er ode mon wuz cracked,  
Bur' 'er dae tell 'im soo ter 'is fairce,  
'Cos 'er liked ter see bairds aroun' abaht,  
Tho' 'er liked 'em ter keep in theyre plairce,  
Not a tryin' tew 'old conversairshuns,  
Bur' a flyin', an' whistlin' in trees,  
A meckin' them warm sounds o' summer an' that,  
Wot wun carried along on the breeze.

One day, Billy's missus, 'er let aht a squale,  
Soo 'e rushed dahn an' went in 'is 'ouse.  
'Er stood theer a tremblin' an' cried, " Wot a shock!  
Why ar've jus' sid a great big fat mouse,  
Wot cum aht ower pantry all brairzon,  
Wi' cheese crumbs all ower 'is fairce;  
Yo'd berrer get crackin' an' see'f theer's a nest,  
'Cos we'll 'ave 'em all ower the plairce."

Soo Billy, 'e went off a scoutin' aroun',  
An' the blackbaird 'e scouted an' all,  
A'follerin' Billy wheerever 'e went,  
Up the 'edge, roun' the trees, dahn the wall,  
Till at last Billy cum ter the tewlshed,  
An' fun' lots o' ' drappin's ' aroun'.  
Soo 'e said ter the blackbaird, " Theer's on'y one thing!  
Some mousetraps 'ull 'a' ter be foun'."

The very nex' mornin', 'e went up the shaps,  
An' 'e bought six big mousetraps all tight;  
'E sot 'em up nicely wi' big lumps o' cheese,  
Fer the mice wot 'ud cum aht at night.  
Then afower 'e tairned in fer 'is slumber,  
'E lef' the shed dooer open wide,  
Soo's anny wot went in ter sample that cheese,  
'Ud 'ave a slice took off theyre 'ide.

Now Billy, 'e slep' like a babby jus' born,  
While the short summer night dimmed the sky.  
'E dae 'ear the snap o' the trap in the shed,  
Nor at dawn, a short, sharp, painful cry.  
When 'e'd ettan 'is breakfuss' o' baircon,  
An' put some sords by fer the bird,  
'E went up the tewlshed ter see wot wuz wot,  
It wuz then as 'is own cry wuz 'aird.

'E cum aht that shed wi' big tears on 'is cheek,  
In 'is 'ond wuz a black crumbled mess.  
'Is missus, 'er shoutid, " Was annythin' caught?"  
An' poor Billy cried aht, " Oh yes!"  
Then 'e showed 'er the corpse of 'is blackbaird,  
Who'd pecked cheese an' met a sad end.  
Then 'e said " We'n laid traps fer them scavingin' mice,  
But we'n killed off a very dear friend."



## NICKY NO-GOOD'S CONVAIRSION

“Nicky No-Good” dae ‘a’ no proper ‘um,  
An’ ‘e slep’ wheer ‘e cud of a night;  
We yewsta mek fun on ‘im when we wun kids,  
‘Cos ‘e looked such a comical sight,  
Wi’ ‘is unshairven fairce alliz grimy,  
An’ ‘is shoes bosted out at the tooes;  
‘E wore a big overcoat down tew ‘is feet,  
An’ ‘e alliz smelled slightly o’ bewze.

“Nicky No-Good” wor one ter be trusted,  
‘Cos ‘e lived be ‘is wits, dun yer see?  
‘E went aroun’ pinchin’ wor ‘ever ‘e cud,  
Then ‘e’d sell it an’ goo on a spree.  
Now the p’lice dae tek Nick very serious,  
‘Cos they said, “Why ‘e’s on’y a tramp!”  
But they knowed ‘e went roun’ a’pickin’ things up,  
An’ folks called ‘im a ‘bit of a scamp’!

‘E often went roun’ a’scrOUNgin’ clothes,  
An’ the women ‘ud gie ‘im some bits,  
Like jed folk’s underwear, trousers an’ stuff,  
‘Oly socks or a pair of ode mits.  
Theer wuz one time ‘e got some good suitin’,  
A black coot an’ some trousers—pin-stripe;  
Soo ‘e coombed ‘is ‘air out wi’ ‘is fingernairls,  
An’ ‘e gid ‘is grimed fairce a good wipe.

Then that mornin’ ‘e traipseed ter Brummichem,  
All dolled up in this ‘city-gent’ gear,  
‘E walked in a restaurant in some back street,  
An’ ‘e ordered a meal an’ some beer;  
Now the manijer ‘ad doubts about ‘im,  
Bur ‘e sairved ‘im the fittle an’ drink,  
‘Cos ‘e thought “There’s a good tip in this fer me,  
‘E’s an ode rich eccentric, ar think!”



“ Nicky No-Good ” dae ‘a’ no doe at all;  
When the bill cum it gid ‘im a shock,  
An’ ‘e said ter the manijer theer an’ then,  
“ I aye payin’ yer that, me ode cock!”  
Well, the manijer fumed an’ ‘e rantid,  
But yo’ cor get blood out of a stoone,  
Soo ‘e sent fer the p’lice an’ Nick wuz locked up,  
In a warm cell that sairme afternewn.

Well, they jus’ cud’na dew nothin’ wi’ ‘im,  
Bur’ ‘e stopped in that cell fer a wick.  
When ‘e cum back ‘e said ‘e’d injiyed it,  
‘Cos they fed ‘im that well, ‘e felt sick;  
An’ ‘e’d ‘ad a good bed theer ter sleep on,  
Wi’ no coed draughts ter freeze ‘im at night,  
Soo ‘e thought as ‘e’d try ter get locked up some moore,  
An’ ‘e did wrung things wi’ all ‘is might.

But the p’lice wor as saft as ‘e’ed thought ‘em,  
An’ they suen twigged ‘is new line in crime,  
Then the magistrairte gid ‘im a roustin’,  
Sayin’ ‘e’d goo ter prison nex’ time.  
“ Nicky No-Good ” dae fancy the prison,  
‘Cos up theer they dae treat yer ser well,  
Soo ‘e started ter sleep in the ode parish chairch,  
In the orgin loft, under the bell.

One night ‘e wuz lyin’ theer snug an’ warm,  
When sweet mewsick cum up from below,  
An’ the voice of a child singin’ some ode hymn,  
Wot Nick’s muther ‘ad sung lung ago.  
Well, the tears run down Nick’s chicks like raindraps,  
An’ the lump in ‘is throat wuz like ‘egg,  
‘E got down on ‘is knees an’ become a chairnged mon,  
An’ prayed, “ Fairther fergive me ar beg!”

“ Nicky No-Good ” resolved as from that hour,  
‘E wuz goona gie up ‘is ode life,  
‘E’d ger’ ‘im a job an’ ‘e’d clane ‘isself up,  
An’ maybe ‘e might marry a wife.  
‘Ow wuz ‘e ter know as ‘idin’ outside,

Wuz some p'licemen who wanted ter nip  
Somebody who kep' pinchin' things from the chairch,  
An' then gie'in them p'licemen the slip.

When Nicky crep' out the arm o' the law  
Shot out fower 'e'd gone many pairces,  
An' when they switched on them theer torches ter see,  
Well, serprise showed on all theyre fairces.  
Nick tried tew explain 'ow 'e'd med a vow,  
As from that minute 'e'd chairgne all 'is ways,  
But now Nick's in prison, an' likely ter be,  
Fer a good many coed lonely days.

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## ONLOOKER

Here's the bench where he would sit,  
His old gnarled stick between his knees.  
Watching with filmy-brown stare  
Movements of a busy town  
Up and down,  
Everywhere.

He is dead they said; a week ago  
He died, friendless, on a lonely bed.  
Watching with eyes of filmy-brown  
Visions of a bygone age  
Page by page,  
Floating down.

What an indifferent world it is  
Passing by in endless throng,  
And on this old bench, I cannot stem  
The grief I feel; knowing,  
I am one of them.



## THE VANISHIN' WAIRLD

Our wairld is a big solid object,  
An' it's med in a way as 'ull last,  
Bur' if yo' tek a look at its 'istory,  
Yo'n see parts on it vanishin' fast.

An' ar doe mean the stuff as it's med on,  
Like the soil an' the rocks an' the trees.  
They jus' fairde out wi' time an' erosion,  
An' aich 'ear teks a draught from the seas.

Wot ar mean is we patterns o' livin'  
Which, in part, spreadin' right roun' the airth,  
Like the skin on a ring o' pig's puddin',  
Or the moisture on babbies at bairth.

It's these parts wot keep on a'gooin',  
Like ode layers o' skin from a mon,  
Wot jus' sheed off wi'out 'im a'knowin',  
As 'e airges, an' time travels on.

When ar look back threw life ter mar child'ood,  
An' it aye such a lung time agoo,  
Ar con see 'ow a good wairld 'as vanished,  
An' a bad wairld 'as cum peepin' threw.

It's just like a big rozy opple,  
Wor ar picked up an' peeled right away,  
Ev'ry slice as ar cut off wuz jewsy,  
Till ar got near the core wi' dismay.

It wuz nasty an' brown an' crawlin'  
Wi' maggits wot wun tairnin' it bad;  
Theer wuz nuthin' ter dew but discard it,  
An' it med me feel almighty sad.

We'n come near that part now ar'm sairtin,  
In this life as we'n livin' on airth,  
'Cos we'n shewerly uncovered the maggits,  
An' they'm active, an' monstrous in gairth.



This wairld tho' aye quite like an opple,  
An' their may be a tew-three layers mooere,  
Bur' if we cor get past these 'ere maggits,  
Then we'n blewmin' well 'ad it fer shewer.

Theyre poison is strung an' it's rotton,  
'Cos it spreads like a big dairty stairn,  
An' so shewer it gets inta yer system,  
Yo'll find scrubbin' wo' clain it agen.

Already it's staired lots o' children,  
Who's minds should be kept pure an' clean,  
Threw some maggits wot call theyreselves taichers,  
Or threw filth wrote in some mogazine.

These maggits jus' say they'm pairmissive,  
That it's modern an' smart ter be bad,  
Bur' it's all part o' theyre dairty system,  
Few distriyin' yer soul, me ode lad!

An' when they'n gor' in an' distriyed yer,  
They'll jus' loff at yer poor empty shell,  
As it totters an' stumbles un'eedin',  
An' draps down in the 'ot fires of 'ell.

Ower wairld is a big solid object,  
An' it's med in a way as 'ull last,  
Bur' it's good skins as strippin' tew quickly,  
An' the best parts am vanishin' fast.

Now their's on'y one thing as con stop it,  
It's the good folks who'll jus' 'a' ter fight,  
Ter stop the stairn spreadin' all ower,  
So we'n jus' 'a' t'ode on very tight.

An' one day we'n crush out the maggits;  
We'n clean out the dark mess as they'n med;  
If we doe, then their's one thing fer sairtin,  
The good wairld 'ull be vanished an' jed.

## THE VANISHIN' WAIRLD

### THE POWER OF MEWSICK

Theer am mighty powers in this world of our'n,  
Wot we knowin' abaht pretty well,  
Like the 'lectric an' gas an' petrol an' ile,  
An' atomics wot blow up like 'ell;  
Then theer's turboes an' jets an' rockits an' things,  
We knowin' wot all these con dēw,  
But theer's things we doe reckon am powerful at all,  
Wot can chairgne this ode wairld threw an' threw.

Tek mewsick fer instance; now nob'dy 'ud think,  
As a tewn on a trumpit cud kill,  
Bur it did in the cairse of a chap wor ar knowed,  
A feller from Brairdley nairme Bill.  
'E lived in a flat—jus' 'isself an' a cat,  
An' above 'im theer lived a lad,  
Wot 'ad got this ode trumpit 'e played all the while,  
An' it druv ode Bill stark starin' mad.

One night Bill cum 'um, an' 'e'd jus' 'ad 'is tay,  
When this trumpit, it startid ter blaht,  
An' suddinly, Bill ups an' runs from that plairce,  
A'shahtin' a 'orrible shaht.  
'E run in the road straight in frunt of a buz,  
An' wuz killed stoone jed in the street,  
Then 'is cat cum aht squailin', an' when 'e sid Bill,  
'E jus' laid dahn an' died by 'is feet.

Yo' knowin' as mewsick con mek yer feel sad;  
Like when yo' sin a film at the " flicks,"  
When the sad bits cum on, an' they playin' sad tewns,  
Well, ye 'eart feels like tew tun o' bricks.  
If a brass band starts playin' a good rousin' march,  
An' yo'm feelin' dahn low at the time,  
It aye lung fower yo'm up an' straight'nin' yer back,  
An' yer spirits am startin' ter climb.



It's abaht fifteen 'ear now since mewsick wuz yewsed,  
Jus' ter tairn ower ode wairld inside aht.  
Yo' think wot 'as 'appened since ' rock an' roll ' cum,  
Why ower wairld's jus' gone right up the spout;  
An' them wot's be'ind it, they knowed, dun yer see?  
'Cos theer's devils abaht wot am clever,  
They mek yewse o' things wot we doe count fer note,  
An' they know we'n jus' say " Well ar never!"

Theer's many a chap in the prime of 'is yewth,  
Wot's bin tairned inta note bur' a fewl,  
Be list'nin' ter rhythms wot's druv 'im 'arf mad,  
It's bin easy ter mek 'im a tewl.  
I 'ad a yung fella cum wairkin' wi' me,  
An' a good chap 'e was in them days;  
'E's since gone ter prison fer knifin' a bloke,  
'Cos 'e took drugs, an' gor' in a maze.

Yo' know them red injuns an' cannibal folk;  
Fower they yewsta goo out on the kill,  
They'd listen ter rhythms jus' like that theer ' rock,'  
Then they'd slaughter till they'd 'ad theyre fill.  
It gor' 'em wairked up till they dae care tew 'ewts,  
They wun blindid, an' thought note o' killin'.  
In fac', they dae reckon they'd 'ad a good time,  
Till some gallons 'o blood they'd bin spillin'.

Yo' tek it from me, we'n bin med proper fewls,  
Be this mewsick wot's bin spread aroun';  
It's note bur' another good try be some folks  
Ter bring we as low as the groun'.  
Soo doe yo' get brainwashed be this crummy beat,  
Jus' remember, some mewsick con kill;  
Yo' listen ter rhythms wot builds yer soul up  
An' wot keeps the wust side on yer still.



## CHARLIE 'CHUCK'

AN'

## 'GOSPIL' GERT

Charlie "Chuck" cud sew an' cook,  
An' 'e dae need a woman at all.  
'E clained out 'is 'ouse abaht once a wick,  
Then 'e'd chuck 'is slops ower the wall.  
'E kep' 'is cot decent, but not ower grand,  
Bur' it suited 'is solitary life;  
'E went dahn the nick an' 'e did it reel quick  
When 'e took "Gospil" Gert fer 'is wife.

"Gospil" Gert wuz tall an' pert,  
An' 'er dae think o' marryin' no mon;  
'Er dae 'old wi' luv'in' an' such like things,  
It wuz Gospil's 'er dotid upon;  
But one day it 'appened, when 'er went aroun'  
Teckin' tracts wot 'er shoved threw folks' dooers,  
'Er fun' Charlie "Chuck" wi' 'is 'onds black wi' muck,  
In 'is gardin', at wairk on all fowers.

Charlie "Chuck" wuz proper shook,  
When 'e sid "Gospil" Gert standin' theer.  
Then summat inside 'im tairned upside dahn,  
An' 'e fun' e' wuz feelin' all queer,  
A sort of a sickniss, but not nothin' bad,  
It wuz moore like when yo' feelin' clammed;  
It went threw 'is frairme like a big flood o' shairme,  
Then it fled tew 'is 'eart an' jus' jammed.

"Gospil" Gert, all tall an' pert,  
Looked at Charlie an' 'ad a queer tairn,  
'Er felt as 'er wanted ter lift 'im up,  
An' 'er 'eart, it jus' started ter bairn;  
'Er went up towarje 'im, an' said, "Owja dew!"

Then the rewf of 'er mouth it jus' cairved,  
Bur'er feelin's wor luv, they cum dahn from above,  
'Ere's another poor soul ter be sairved!

Charlie "Chuck" 'e took 'is 'ook,  
An' 'e locked 'isself up in 'is cot.  
'E'd never knowed nothin' like this afower,  
Feelin' coed an' then suddinly 'ot.  
'Is 'eart it kep' thumpin'; 'is legs they went weak,  
Soo 'e sot 'isself dahn in a chiar:  
Then 'is letter box flapped an' a pairper wuz drapped,  
Which said, "RISE UP! YER SAIRVOUR IS NEAR!"

"Gospil" Gert wuz all alert,  
As 'er stood be the dooer o' that cot,  
'Er meant ter get Charlie ter chairch if 'er cud,  
Soo 'er rooted 'erself ter the spot.  
At las' the dooer opened an' Charlie cum out,  
An' they fairced one another at last;  
'E wantid 'er luv; but 'er wantid 'is soul;  
They wun married fower sommer wuz past.

Charlie "Chuck" 'ad gor' a pluck,  
Fer ter teck "Gospil" Gert fer a wife;  
'Er toed 'im er'd married 'im jus' fer one thing,  
Ter prepare 'im fer etairnal life:  
'Er read 'im the Gospils; 'er quoted the psalms;  
If 'e kissed 'er, 'er pushed 'im away.  
'Er said theer wuz no time fer that sorta thing,  
It wuz ter neaw ter th'ode Judgemint Day.

"Gospil" Gert wuz very 'airt,  
When 'er 'usband kep' tryin' ter luv;  
Such things as kissin', an' cuddlin' up,  
Wun 'o this wairld, an' not from above!  
She bought 'im a Bible, as black as the graive,  
An' fer Sundees, a dark sewt ter wear,  
But Charlie wuz pinin', 'cos 'e wuz in luv,  
Gert's relijun wuz tew much ter bear.

Charlie "Chuck" 'e took 'is ook,  
An' 'e lef' "Gospil" Gert in the lairch;



It wuz no good 'im tryin' ter luv a stoone,  
Wot wuz already 'wed' ter the chairch.  
They fun' 'im one mornin' wi' blood on 'is fairce,  
Be the railway wot run up above,  
'Cos it's better ter not 'ave a woman at all,  
Than ter wed one wot jus' conna luv.

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### FOOLISH FLY

Foolish fly, with your angry endeavour,  
How I wish you were half as clever  
As I, for here, just a breath away  
Is freedom, yet you struggle to stay,  
Beating your wings at unyielding glass.  
You will not, though I help you, pass  
Through this casement, opened wide,  
Into unending space outside.

What are the thoughts of your minute brain  
As you batter at my window pane?  
Are you angry that I interfere  
In your dilemma? Is there fear  
In that sharp tension you display,  
That I can crush you? Who can say  
What hideous notions keep you here,  
What blind unreasoning motives steer  
Your loathsome body up and down?

Foolish fly, with your angry endeavour,  
Clearly I see how men, though clever  
Far beyond your comprehension,  
Share your own sharp fearful tension,  
Striving to free themselves from snares  
Into which they blunder unawares,  
And will not, though the way be clear,  
Escape from bondage and from fear.



## UNIMPLIYED

The chap wot lives jus' ower the road  
'As cum 'um from waik in 'is car,  
'E's rubbin' 'is 'onds theer an' lookin' all smug,  
Now 'e's lightin' a tupp'ny cigar;  
'Is missus, all smilin', 'as cum ter the dooer,  
'Is kids am theer all overjiyed;  
Ar feel as ar've cum ter the end o' the road,  
'Cos fer three wicks now, ar'm unimpliyed.

The boss, 'e sent fer me. "Jack!" 'e says,  
"Ow lung 'an yer waiked fo' we now?"  
"Why neely ten 'ear!" ar says, "Why dun yer ask?"  
"Well, it's like this," 'e says, spakin' slow,  
"We'm 'avin' ter cut down—yo' know 'ow things bin?  
Soo it means yo' 'avin' the sack;  
Ar'm sorry, o'de tairter that it's cum ter this,  
Bur' it aye nuthin' pairsonal—Jack!"

'E gid me me cards all stamped up right,  
A fine testimonial an' all;  
Ar cum 'um ter fairce me dear missus 'an kids,  
But me back wuz right up ter the wall;  
When yo'm forty-eight yo'm an o'de mon these days,  
Soo it's 'ard ter ger' a good job,  
An' when they keep sayin' "We want yunger men!"  
Well, it's jus' like a punch in the gob.

Ar never thought as ar'd cum ter this,  
A' skulkin' about wi'out waik.  
Ar've never bin rodney, like some blokes ar know,  
An' it's brought me right up wi' a jairk.  
'Cos theer's many a yung mon wot waiked 'long o' me,  
Wot fernaiged, an' wuz 'bolshi' an' all,  
An' these wun the ones wot wun gid the bes' jobs,  
While the likes o' me went ter the wall.

Ar've alliz bin a machine-tewl mon,  
Apprenticed ar was fer fower 'ear,  
Theer's nob'dy cud dew mar job better ner me,  
But theer's som'dy 'ull 'ave it ar fear.  
An' ar back yo' it's one o' these 'ere 'bolshi' kids,  
As doe care a damn fer the fairm,  
Wot'll coj the job annyroad jus' fer doe,  
An' then goo on strike jus' fer a gairme.

Ar wunder whether tryin' yer best,  
An' strivin' ter dew a good job,  
Is reely the way ter ger' on in this life,  
When the plums goo ter some rodney slob,  
As leans on 'is yewnton ter ger' 'im off ' Scot,'  
If 'e gets sacked fer dewin' bad wairk,  
Then praiches o' rights fer the wairkers an' that,  
Which is note but the jam wi'out cairke.

Me wife an' kids aye goona goo short,  
Soo ar doe care wot job ar dew;  
Tho' it seems a wairste as a mon wi' mar skill,  
'As ter stond in the unimpliyed queue;  
This country is gooin' ter the dogs ter be shewer,  
An' the trend on it's cum from outside,  
Ar feel as we'm near ter the end o' the line,  
When the likes o' me get's unimpliyed.

The chap wot lives jus' over the road  
'As cum 'um from wairk in 'is car,  
'E's rubbin' 'is 'onds theer an' lookin' all smug,  
Now 'e's lightin' a tupp'ny cigar;  
Bur' 'e's got blewin' munny ter bairn,  
It shewer meks me think, tho' ar've raiched forty-eight,  
As ar've got such a lot ar con lairn.

That car 'e drives 'ull want a new clutch,  
An' 'is M.O.T.'s about dew,  
Ar reckon ar'll 'a'ter goo'n gie 'im a nudge,  
Else 'e'll find as 'e'll be in the stew;  
Yo'n gorra dew summat when the days am ser lung,  
'Cos yo' cor sit about an' jus' pine,  
An' besides that it giz me a chawnce agen,  
T've a look at the car as wuz mine.



## PIG'S PUDDIN' AN' CABBAGE

Ar'll tell yer the tairl o' 'Grairvey Chops' Joones,  
 Who wus spare in the flesh, but big in the boones.  
 'E luv'd all 'is fittle an' et it wi' glee,  
 Porchops an' beefsteaks as big as cud be,  
 Wi' grairvy all brown an' tairters like cream;  
 When 'e opened 'is bairsin, the smell wus a dream.

Now when the 'bull' blowed an' we sat down tew ate,  
 Ode Percy the Padlock ud cum, shewer as fate;  
 'E wus the chap as locked all the dowers,  
 An' spied fer the gaffer, sometimes on all fowers.  
 'E'd sit next ter Joonsey an' wait fer the smell,  
 An' 'is mouth ud' drap open an' wearter like 'ell.

Yo' couldna 'elp gerrin' a lump in yer throat,  
 Ter watch 'ow 'e suffered, the silly ode goat!  
 'Cos ode Percy's missus dae dew as 'er should  
 Ter feed the poor devil; an' try as we wud,  
 We couldna mek out what 'et gid 'im tew ate,  
 'Cos 'e 'et it all secret, an' then licked 'is plairt.

But 'is body wus bended an' thin as a rairk,  
 'Is beard wus all grizzled an' mek no mistairk,  
 'E wor far from madness; the gleam in 'is eye  
 When 'e smelled Joones's fittle wus wicked an' sly.  
 Then 'e'd goo up the corner an' mutter an' moan,  
 While 'e grubbed out 'is bairsin an' licked on 'is own.

One day, Joonsey come like a giant of yore,  
 But Percy wus missin', we dae know what for;  
 Joonsey fatched down 'is bairsin an' wiped 'is great chin,  
 But the smell o' the fittle dae cum driftin' in.  
 When 'e took the fust mouthful we thought 'e'd bin shot,  
 'Cos 'e screwed up 'is 'physog' and' spit out the lot.



"What's this muck!" 'e shouted, an' tipped it all out,  
An' we all gathered closer around and about;  
"That aye mine!" said Joonsey, "'Er wouldna dare,  
Mar missus, terput me such stinkin' bad fare!  
Pig's puddin' an' cabbage! Ar'm shewer yo'll agree,  
It's a mess fer a mad dog, an' no yewse ter me!"

Ode Percy cum skulkin' an' peerin' about,  
Wi' grairvey all ower 'is 'onds an' 'is snout.  
'E cum up ter Joonsey an' drapped on 'is knees,  
An' blairted and blethered some perishin' plees,  
"Doe 'it me!" 'e cried, "Ar'm a poor sick ode mon!  
'A' pity ar beg yer; 'A' pity mar son!

Ar've 'et all yer fittle ar'm sorry ter say,  
If yo'll tell me the cost ar'll be willin' ter pay."  
Well, Joonsey, though big 'ad a 'eart saft as muck,  
Yo' cud see right away as 'e'd be a dead duck.  
"Gerrup yer saft gawbee!" 'e said wi' a sob,  
"Yo'm welcome, ode tairter, soo shut yer great gob!"

We chucked Percy's fittle out into the yard,  
An' the mad dogs cum growlin' an' fightin' 'eaven's 'ard.  
An' after that day Percy Padlock an' Joones,  
'Ud sit side be side an' pick at the boones.  
As Joonsey 'ud say, "Theer's enuf 'ere fer tew;  
If yo' cor 'elp the ode 'uns, then wot con yer dew!"

## SAMSON AND JEMIMA

Now Zacharia Smout wuz a very strung mon,  
'E cud bend iron bars inter rings,  
An' crush lumps o' coal in the crock of 'is arm,  
An' dew lots of other great things.  
'E wor very tall, an' ter see 'im about,  
Yo'd think 'im no strunger ner me,  
But under 'is clothes 'e wuz 'arder than iron,  
An' 'is arms wun as thick as mar knee.

Ar remember one night down at th'ode ' Flairmin' Forge.'  
Some lung-'aired yobs cum in the bar,  
A swaggerin' an' loffin' an' meckin' a row  
As tho' they wun better be far  
Than onny o' we as wuz sot wi' we beer;  
But we dae gorm em' much right away,  
They wun like big saft kids as wuz 'avin a gairme,  
Soo we lerrum gerron wi' theyre play.

Then one on 'em cum, a big dark, leathered, chap,  
An' 'e stood theer a gawpin' at we,  
Wi' a smile on 'is fairce, an' a glint in 'is eye,  
As much as ter say—" Ar con see  
Yo'm a right crummy lot an' in just 'arf a jot  
Ar'm gooin' t'have some fun outa thee."  
But we jus' kep' on talkin' as tho' 'e wor theer  
An' it med 'im reel mad yo' cud see.

Now Zacharia Smout wuz a very strung mon,  
Bur' 'e wor one fer 'avin' a row,  
'E liked ter be quiet an' ter be left aloon,  
'E dae like ter cause trouble no'ow.  
But this big dark kid started a playin' 'is fairce,  
An' 'e ruffled Zac's 'air wi' 'is 'ond,  
Soo Zac says, " Now stoppit, an' doe be ser saft.  
We doe want ter play, understand?"

Then the kid gor' all uppish an' says, " Look 'ere yo!  
Ar doe want tew 'airt yer but watch it."  
Then 'e grabs at Zac's collar an' giz 'im a jolt,  
An' says " Mind yer mouth or yo'll cotch it!"



The rest o' the gang stood theer chewin' the cud,  
Like gormliss cows ower a gairte.  
It wuz clear they wun lookin' to 'ave some good sport  
Jus' be duffin' we up, shewer as fairte.

Then Zac smiles " O.K.! Let's be friends—wot yer say?"  
An' 'e 'odes out 'is 'ond ter the fella,  
Who looks at the yobs who'n got smiles on theyre gobs,  
An' says, " This lot am all blewmin' yella!"  
Soo 'e grabs at Zac's 'ond fer ter gee it a squeeze,  
But tew 'airt Zac as much as 'e cud,  
Tho' 'e sewn 'ad a shock 'cos Zac's 'ond felt like rock,  
When Zac squeezed it wuz like crackin' wood.

Then Zac lifted this yobbo right ower 'is yed,  
An' carried 'im out ter the back.  
'E drapped 'im as 'ard as 'e cud in some muck  
Like a great big pertairter sack.  
The rest o' the gang devilled off right away;  
They cud see it wuz choppit ter linger.  
'Cos moost on 'em wor onny mooer than yung kids;  
Zac cud fight 'em wi' th'end o' 'is finger.

Now lots o' fine wenches wun dead struck on Zac,  
'Cos besides bein' strung 'e wuz 'andsome,  
Wi' dark wavin' 'air an' a lickle mistash,  
'E wuz known be 'em all as yung Samson;  
One such, nairme o' Molly, we thought as 'e'd wed,  
'Cos they looked a fine pair close tergether,  
Bur' 'e married Jemima who wairked in a shap,  
An' 'e sewn cum ter th'end o' 'is tether.

One day in the summer, up Sedgley it was,  
We'd bin 'avin a drink at ' The Lion ';  
A fete wuz in swing roun' the back o' the chairch,  
Soo Zac says, " Let's gie it a try on!"  
We tried all the gairmes, the cokernut shies,  
Shove-'airpenny, an' such things as that,  
Then Zac gid the ' Try yer strength ' machine  
A trial; an' 'e bosted it flat.



Then who should cum flouncin' up, all dressed ter kill  
Wi' 'er bes' bib an' tucker a' shinin',  
But Jemima Meese a' showin' 'er knees,  
An' the vicar all sad an' whinin'.  
Jemima says, "Zac! Can you put it back?"  
The vicar says, "Pray dew my biy!"  
Soo Zac tried 'is strength once mooer that day,  
An' reared the thing back ter the sky.

Jemima wuz smilin'; the vicar wuz pleased,  
The sun bairned its way down the valley,  
Then Zac says, "We'n goo now few summat t'ate,  
Ar needs some good fewd in mar bally!"  
Jemima kep' smilin' ter show off 'er teeth.  
'Er says, "You mun all stop fer tea!"  
An' ar'm damned if we dae, 'tho ar cor say,  
As the fittle we got suited me.

We 'ad lickle jellies, an' lettice, an' cairkes,  
An' dishes all chock full o' custard;  
Theer wor no pigs puddin', not sausage an' stuff,  
No biled 'am wi' lashins o' mustard.  
Ar con see Zac now in that great big tent,  
Sippin' tay an' a bowin' an' scairpin,  
An' watchin' Jemima wheerever 'er mewved,  
Ar cud see jus' the way things wun shairpin'!

An' soo, shewer as fairte, they got spliced the nex' spring;  
Ar wuz bes' mon, 'cos Zac wuz me mairte,  
Ar kep' on a'wishin' as 'e'd chairnge 'is mind,  
But then it wuz tew blewmin' lairte.  
Ar dae like Jemima nor none of 'er folks,  
They struck me as bein' real queer,  
An' the fittle they sairved wuz the sairme crummy stuff  
As we'd 'ad at that fete the las' year.

About six munth lairter 'e lef' from the wairks,  
Fer ter goo in the shap wi' Jemima;  
'E toed we 'er'd gid 'im a partnership,  
Bur 'e wor ner a soshul climber.  
Besides that, 'er shap wuz a drap-down plairce,

Sellin' bacca an' sweets an' the like,  
An' Zac ended up like a errand biy,  
A teekin' stuff round on a bike.

Then 'e stopped drinkin' beer an' a smokin' 'is pipe,  
An' 'er med 'im wear black every Sunday.  
It greaved me ter see the sad look on 'is fairce  
As 'e wairved we ' tarrah ' every Munday.  
'Cos 'e wanted ter be wi' 'is mairtes, ar cud see,  
An' ter dew a mon's job, like 'e yewsta,  
Soo we all on we gid 'im a wairve an' a shout,  
Jus' ter gie the poor devil a bewster.

Jemima, 'e toed me, jus' nagged 'im ter jeth,  
Bur 'e reckoned 'e never cud strike 'er,  
An' although ter mar mind, 'er wor much cop,  
It wuz plain Zac thought nob'dy wuz like 'er.  
" 'Er wants me ter be wot I aye, dun yer see?"  
Says Zac, " Ar'm fed up ter the boone  
Wi' 'avin' tew allwiz be wachin' me step;  
Ar wish as 'er'd leave me aloone!"

Now Zacharia Smout wuz a very strung mon,  
But the woman 'e married jus' killed 'im,  
Be tryin' ter mek 'im a ponce of a bloke;  
'Er drained off the mon'ood wot filled 'im;  
Soo much soo, in the end, 'e went roun' the bend,  
'Cos folks loffed at the plight 'e wuz in  
Espeshully them as 'e'd licked in 'is prime,  
An' the wenches who'd wanted 'im then.

It's the sairme in the Bible, wi' Samson of ode;  
When a woman steps in, woe betides,  
Ter cut off the strength wot 'e'd wore wi' such pride,  
An' ter gie 'im a short back an' sides.  
Now Zacharia Smout's lyin' under the ground,  
An' the strength on 'im faded away;  
It 'airts me ter think as it mightna a'bin,  
If we'd stopped outa Sedgley that day.



## THE RESIRRECTION

Now ar like a reel good conversairtion  
Abaht things wot should be in we thoughts,  
Tho' theer's some blokes wot talk abaht nothin'  
'Cept football, an' sex, an' such sports.  
Jus' gie me the chance up the bewzer  
An' ar'm suen jumpin' in wi' me views  
'Baht books, and relijun an' culcha,  
An' wot's gooin' on in the news.

Theer's a grewp on we dahn at "The Miner's"  
Wot meets up of a Saturdee night  
An' we puts the wairld right in a jiffy  
On six pints o' luvly All-bright.  
Jus' lairtly tho', we'n drawed we 'orns in,  
'Cos a new fella's cum on the scene  
Wot's gor' a yed bigger new fifty;  
'E's a student from by Tippon Green.

Now these students they'm reely the limit,  
When they cumin' from collije all slick,  
'Cos they thinkin' they'm Lord God Almighty  
A'creatin' the wairld in a wick.  
This one, 'e doe listen ter we lot,  
It's 'is own voice 'e likes tew 'ear best,  
Soo we ler'im ger on a'talkin',  
While we g'in we brains a good rest.

But las' Sat'dee 'e suen got mar cror out  
'Bout that theer Resirrection, dust see?  
'E wuz meckin' aht it wuz all 'eyewash,'  
An' relijun means summat ter me;  
I ave nea' sairnt tho, ar'll tell yer,  
Bur' ar knows wor' ar feels in me 'eart,  
An' I aye goona 'ave such thinks sneered at  
Be a tuppenny collije upstart.

Then 'e says as this 'ere Resirrection  
Was a gairme wot the Lord's mairtes thought up;  
Soo ar looks this yung twairp in the eyeballs  
An' said, "Yo'm a gormliss yung pup!"  
But then 'e gor' uppish an' nasty  
An' 'e said as 'e'd thought moore ner me  
Soo are said "Well yo'm boun' tew, ode tairter!  
'Cos ar spend moore time wairkin' than thee!"

Then ar got back on th'ode Resirrection,  
An' ar gid 'im mar views right away;  
Me mairtes went as quiet as the gairveyard;  
Jus' fer once they'd got nothin' ter say.  
Ar says, "Jus' serpose yo' got crackin'  
An' spread a good tairle all around,  
As yo'd jus' sid a mairte o' yo'rn livin'  
Wot folks knowed 'ud bin jed underground.

Dun yer think yo'd get folks ter believe it?  
No yo' wud'na—not in 'undred'ear!  
But them theer disciples, they did it,  
'Cos they'd sid as theyre Master wuz theer.  
An' dust know, they got the chairch gooin'  
On the bairsis of all as they'd sid;  
In abaht sixty days is wuz foundid,  
An' not just on 'eyewash' air kid."

Well, ar fetched me breath then, while this student  
Sat starin' at me proper o'de,  
An' me mairtes, well, they sot theer like morkins,  
A'lettin' theyre All-bright goo coed:  
Then 'e drunk up 'is beer an' skidaddled,  
'Cos ar'd stood up an' blowed aht 'is light.  
'E dae think 'e'd find such an answer  
In a pub of a Saturdee night.

That's the trouble wi' some folks in these days,  
Ispeshully these yung collije 'queers.'  
Jus' three 'ears studyin' an' yewsin theyre brainns,  
An' it's banners, an' demos an' jeers;



Theyre book lairnin' tairns theyre minds funny,  
'Cos they cumin' back full of 'ot air,  
An' it seems as moost chewsin' relijun  
Ter sneer at, an' that's 'ardly fair.

'Cos it's bin gooin' well fer such a long time,  
An' it's dun good fer moore than one bloke,  
Jus' bairsed on that theer Resirrection,  
Wot that yung pup said wuz a joke.  
Ar cor tell yer jus' why ar believes it,  
It's 'ard tew explain such a thing,  
Bur ar know as ar ' feels ' Resirrection  
Ev'ry time winter bosts into spring.

DEPARTURE  
BY  
TRAIN

---

Suddenly, it is departure time;  
Bells ring; a strident voice  
Peels out from the Tannoy;  
The crowd surges forward  
Like fragments of iron  
Drawn to a giant magnet.  
It is happening too soon.  
There is no time left  
For more than a perfunctory kiss,  
An embarrassed flurry  
Of ill-chosen useless words.  
So much is left unsaid  
That could have consummated  
The waiting hour.

Now, at the dark tunnel's mouth  
A last fond glimpse, a wave  
From those who are left behind,  
And in the roaring gloom,  
The things that were left unsaid  
Cry and clamour through my brain,  
Then in the sudden light beyond  
Are caught naked and ashamed  
In the stony gaze of strangers.

## MAIRDER

Now Airbel decided ter mairder 'is wife,  
After six pints of 'ode dahn "The Crown."  
'E figgered 'e'd best bash 'er 'ard on the yed  
On the bench wheer 'er 'ad a lie dahn.  
The thought o' the deed med 'im sweat a bit  
Bur 'e grinned while 'e wiped 'is brow,  
'Cos fer munths 'e'd bin wantin' ter dew 'er in,  
Fer the way 'er wuz traitin' 'im now.

When they fust got married 'er'd traited 'im good  
Wi' fittle an' all a mon needs,  
Bur' all of a suddin 'er went proper queer,  
An' niglectid ter gie 'im 'is feeds.  
In fac' ar'd goo fairther an' say, 'er dae care,  
Whether Airbel wuz livin' nor jed.  
'Er dae seem ter know 'e wuz theer at all,  
Not dahnstairs ner upstairs in bed.

'Er went proper rodney an' wudna clane th'ouse,  
Tho' 'er'd dew jobs fer nairbours close by,  
Such as visitin' th'ode 'uns an' meckin' 'em tay,  
An' 'angin' out washin' ter dry.  
Then Airbel wuz sent 'um one 'ot afternewn,  
'Cos the foundry 'ad closed dahn threw th'eat,  
An' theer wuz 'is missus asleep up the back  
On a bench, covered up wi' a sheet.

'E vowed theer an' then as 'e'd mairder 'er suen,  
'Cus 'e cudna 'bide women wot slep'.  
It wuz wusser tew 'im than the women wot stood  
Fer hours cantin' out on the step.  
'E dae goo ter waik on the day o' the deed,  
But went off a'trairpsin' aroun':  
'E kep' from the plairces wheer 'e might be knowed,  
An' 'e 'ad a good bewse up the town.



All blinded wi' drink 'e crep' um' roun' the back,  
'E'd fun a thick stick on the way;  
The bench an' the white sheet wun theer as befower,  
An' 'e struck till 'is breath went away.  
Then 'e devilled off quick stumblin' ower the slag,  
An' up the ode Wren's Nest tew 'ide.  
When 'e cum tew 'is senses an' thought wor 'e'd dun,  
'E blaarted, an' blethered, an' sighed.

'E thought 'o the day as 'e'd married 'is wench,  
An' the pretty yung fairce as 'er'd got.  
Then the thought on 'er lyin' jed under that sheet,  
Med 'im tremble right theer on the spot.  
Soo shairkin' 'is feathers, an' squarin' 'is jaw,  
'E started off back tew 'is 'um;  
A big crowd o' women wuz theer at the frunt,  
An' 'e walked up an' says, "Right! Ar've cum!"

It wuz then Airbel got the best shock of 'is life,  
'Cos 'is missus cum out an' says, "Eh!  
Wheer th'ell an' yo' bin—Yo' shud see wot's gone on!  
Them vandils an bin 'ere terday!"  
Well Airbel wuz dumbstruck an' says, "Wotcha mean!"  
'Er says, "Ar'd bin bairkin', yer fewl!  
Ar'd med ten big loaves, an' some pies, an' some cairkes,  
An' ar'd put 'em outside jus' ter cewl.

Ar reckoned as ar'd bin niglectin' yer, see,  
Soo ar wanted ter put summat right,  
But that's wor it's like in these days, aye it now?  
Fer goodness yo' jus' gerrin' spite;  
They smoshed all me bread, an' me luvly fresh cairkes  
As they laid cewlin' under a sheet,"  
But Airbel surprised all the lot on 'em theer,  
Be kissin' 'er right off 'er feet.

## COUNCILLOR FRED

Theer's a chap ar know wot's a councillor.  
We callin' 'im " Snottynose " Fred;  
'E's gor' an' almight bob on 'isself,  
An' a pairminent coed in 'is yed.

We voted 'im in, soo it's ower fault,  
An' no good bewailin' wot's dun,  
'Cos once they'n gor' in folks, it's ' Choppit ';  
They'm all sot fer a good tairm o' fun.

Fred's dun things like tattin' an' road-wairk;  
'E's gor' as much brains as a flay,  
Yet when 'e gets spoutin' 'is yed off  
Yo'd think as 'e'd gor' a " bee-yay."

Ar went tew a big council meetin'  
Tew 'ere 'em a dewin' theyre stuff.  
Well, I aye got much brain in mar noodle,  
But wot Fred said gid me a good loff.

Mindjo though, 'e aye on 'is lonesome,  
Some others theer talked loods o' tripe;  
I 'ad t'ave a pint when ar cum out,  
'Cos that meetin' jus' gid me the gripe.

It beats me 'ow blokes like ode ' Snotty '  
Am allowed tew 'ave such blewmin' power,  
Ter Lord it like's tho' they wuz somethin'  
When they'm such an almighty shower.

The town clirk an' them other bigwigs  
Desairve all the ' say ' as they'n got,  
'Cos after thy're nairmes they'n got letters  
Ter prewve as they knowin' wot's wot.

An' when such as them startin' spakin',  
Yo' con tell they'n got brains right away,  
By theyre speech, an' the way as they dun things,  
An' they know wheer ter goo, an' which way.



Now Fred, an' such blokes, when they spoutin',  
They goo roun' the gaswairks three times,  
Then up be the cut ter the foundry,  
Fower they gerrin' on the right lines.

Ar think we shud be in great dairnger,  
If blokes like ode " Snottynose " Fred,  
Ever cum tew 'ave power yewnivairsal,  
If they did then I 'opes ar'd be jed.

It's 'appened like that out in China,  
Wheer the peasants 'an got th'upper 'ond,  
Yo'm frighten' ter spit theer, they tell me,  
Else yo'm copped be some h'igorant band.

'Cos " Wheer theer's no sense theer's no feelin',"  
They sen, an' it's shewer ter be right,  
These ruff 'uns dew yer fer nothin',  
Or jus' 'cos they'm chock full o' spite.

Anyroad, theer's a slight ray o' sunshine,  
Wot ar read about in a book.  
Ode " Snottynose " Fred, an' blokes like 'im,  
Wun p'raps suen be teckin' theyre 'ook.

A 'oman nairm Maud,\* soo this book says,  
'As writ out a great big report,  
An' some o' these ' tuppenny ' councillors,  
Am sewn gooin' ter be took real short.

Then " Snottynose " Fred, an' 'is cronies,  
Wo' 'ave ser much power onny mooer.  
It'll be the picked brains as'll 'ave it,  
An' poor Fred'll get showed the dooer.

Now doe get me wrung, gentle reader,  
Theer's councillors wot dew real well,  
But ar back as yo' knows some like Freddy,  
Who'd be better a'councillin' in 'ell.

\*The Maud Report on Education.

## THE 'OSS 'AIR SOFEE

When mar granny died 'er wuz gone eighty-seven,  
An' 'er fairce wuz a jiy ter behold,  
All smilin' an' peaceful, like some-dy asleep,  
'Cos 'er'd gone ter the realms o' bright gold.  
A lovelier 'oman 'ud be 'ard ter find,  
All 'er life 'ud bin spent dewin' good.  
Why folks 'ud cum tew 'er when they wun dahn low,  
An' 'er'd alliz dew all as 'er cud.

Ar yewstew injiy gooin' up tew 'er 'ouse,  
'Cos 'er'd mek such a big fuss o' me;  
'Er'd call me "'er flower!" an' gie me some 'suc'  
An' a sixpince ter goo'n 'ave a spree.  
'Er'd gor' 'oss 'air sofee along the one wall,  
An' manny a time ar've reclin'd  
'Cos it gid yer such funny sensairshuns  
When the 'oss 'airs stuck in yer be'ind.

When granny gor o'der, an' me a yung mon,  
Ar still yewsta pop up 'er plairce;  
An' although 'er dae call me "'er flower!" annymoore,  
Ar cud tell be the look on 'er fairce  
As 'er still liked ter see me, an' once 'er said "Bill!  
Get the Good Book from off o' that shelf.  
Read John, chapter fifteen, verse twelve, ter me,  
Then try ter live like that yerself.

"If yo'll try ter love ev'rybody yo' meet  
Yo'll suen find as life aye ser bad,  
'Cos lovin' breeds lovin', an' brings its rewards;  
If yo'll dew wot ar say yo'll be glad.  
But doe try ter walk roun' the plairce like a saint,  
'Cos yo'n put some folks off right away;  
Jus' live in the wairld, but dew 'eavenly things,  
An' dew 'em wi'out thought o' pay."

Ar remembered them wairds wot me granny 'ad said,  
An' believe me, they'm certainly trew.



Ar've lots o' friends in the folks wot ar've 'elped,  
An' ar've fun' meself lovin' 'em tew.  
But when granny died as ar've toed yer jus' now,  
An' when 'er wuz buried an' gone,  
A lawyer cum roun' fer ter read out 'er will,  
Ar con tell yo' it put me one on.

'Er'd left far mooer munny than ever we thought,  
Bur er'd lef' lots ter this, that an' th'other,  
Barnardo's, the blind, an' the deaf an' the dumb,  
An' abaht fifty poun' ter me mother.  
Annyroad, that wuz it, till at th'end o' the will  
The lawyer said, "One more ter come!  
She's left th'oss 'air sofee to Bill, her grandson,  
Provided he keeps it at 'um."

Well loff! Yo' shud 'eared 'um—they bosted theyre sides.  
Some said "Well, it jus' sairves yer right!  
A'goin' up 'er 'ouse an' fussin' 'er up,  
Now 'er's left yer th'ode sofee fer spite."  
Another says, "Fancy a'leavin' 'im that,  
Why it prickles like 'ell when yo' sit."  
Ar toed 'em, "Ar sot on it lots as a kid,  
Soo ar doe mind the prickles a bit."

The years cum an' went an' ar'd married a wench;  
Three kids cum along on the way.  
The ode 'oss 'air sofee wuz sat on a lot,  
An' they'd yewse it as part o' they're play.  
They'd loff when the 'airs yewsta prickle theyre skin,  
Then they'd jump up an' down on it ruff,  
Till one day it broke wi' a smosh on the flooer,  
An' the rug wuz all sawdust an' fluff.

But when we looked closer, we fun a brown bag,  
Wot tinkled when ar dragged it free;  
It wuz full o' gold sov'rins, right up ter the top,  
An' a pairper inside 'dressed ter me—  
It said "To 'me flower' who cum ter see me,  
An' cheered me up when ar wuz low,  
Remember the verse in the Good Book wot says,  
'Luv others, as I 'ave luvved yo.,'"

## RETURN O' THE PRODIGAL

Once moore down be the 'cut' ar stray,  
An' chuck a stoone ter break the sun,  
Till mem'ry drags me on me way,  
An' leads me off down Puddler's Run.

Ar walk along the dusty track,  
Wheer shells o' rewinous 'ouses stand,  
Wi' gairpin' winders wide an' black,  
Wot stare, like skulls, across the land.

Lung shaddas on the pathway lie,  
Like fingers restin' on a book,  
Ode mem'ries spring up wi' a sigh,  
Ode fairces everywheer ar look.

'Cos this was paradise ter me,  
Mar child'ood's 'appy wonderland,  
Tho' some might ponder wor' ar see  
In this drab plairce ter think it's grand.

But they cor look out threw my eyes,  
Nor feel the wistfulness ar feel,  
They might be tecken by surprise  
Ter find mar paradise soo reel.

This street wuz once a busy plairce,  
Wi' folks about from morn till night,  
An' washin' pegged out on the lines,  
Like frantic peace flags wavin' white.

On Mondees all the 'maids' 'ud thump,  
An' women talked across the walls.  
Us kids 'ud run an' skip an' jump,  
An' play wi' tip-cats, tops, an' balls.



Mar mom an' dad wun 'appy folk,  
An' me; ar wuz theyre on'y child,  
But they wun poor—life wor no joke,  
Tho' fairte ferever on me smiled.

Ar never once went short o' grub,  
Mar plairte wuz filled wi' bread an' mate,  
Me fairther dae bewse down the pub,  
Me mother kep' 'er wifely state.

But now, ar've lairned the things I ought,  
I think ar know wot life's about,  
Ter mek shewer as ar dae goo short,  
They spent theyre years a'goin' wi'out.

Our 'ouse, or all wot's left on it,  
Stands up a corner by a bonk.  
The frunt dooer 'angs all flairked an' split,  
The weeds 'ave sprung up thick an' ronk.

But once ar step inside the shell,  
An' touch the crumblin' sodden stoone,  
The dead folk wor' ar luvud ser well,  
Stand by me, an' ar'm not aloone.

Fer twenty 'ears ar've bin away,  
Ar've crossed the wiarld a tew-three times  
An' lived life riotous an' gay,  
In far-off lands an' sunnier climes.

The life ar've lived aye brought much jiy,  
I aye found wealth nor peace nowheer.  
The dreams wor thrilled me as a biy,  
Am smoshed ter smithereens, ar fear.

When ar cum out o' th'army see,  
The street dae seem the sairme no moore;  
Ar'd tairsted life, an' 'ad a spree.  
Ter settle down wuz just a boore.

Me dad 'ad gor' it all planned out,  
'E wanted me ter wairke wi' 'im,  
Bur ar chucked all that up the spout,  
An' lef' one day just on a whim.

Ar'd got some munny pur' away,  
An' some the gov'mint paid beside,  
Soo off ar sairied across the sae;  
Me dad, 'e rairved; me mother cried.

Ar did all sorts o' jobs abroad,  
An' wor' I airned ar spent reel quick;  
In Spain ar cud'na pay me booard,  
In Africa, ar went down sick.

Ar gor' in wi' a crummy set,  
The drink wuz all ar lived for then.  
They pinched wot munny they cud get,  
Then lef' me in a prison den.

At last, the folly o' me ways,  
Cum 'um ter me, an' got me beat.  
Ar vowed as ar'd live out me days,  
Wi' mom an' dad in ower ode street.

Becos ar wor lung in one spot,  
They gid up writin' me from 'um;  
The very las' wairds as ar got  
From mom an' dad was "Wish yo'd cum!"

When ar got back, ar fun' they'd died,  
Me mother tew months after dad,  
Ar might's well tell yer as ar cried,  
An' all me thoughts went bleak an' sad.

Ar remembered then th'ode Bible tairle,  
Of 'ow the prodigal went 'um,  
An' 'ow 'is fairther run right out,  
An' kissed 'im sayin', "Glad yo'n cum!"



The street is all desairted now,  
The folks ar knowed 'ave gone away.  
Theer aye one friend within, without,  
Ter welcome me on this sad day.

No fairther runnin' down the track,  
Ter cum an' tek me by the 'ond,  
Jus' gairpin' winders, wide an' black,  
Wot stare, like skulls, across the land.

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## AT A DISUSED CANAL ARM

I fear this water,  
Whose surface contorts  
In dark oily creases;  
On whose brink I waver  
Watching the sodden frame  
Of a dead barge  
Slowly rocking in its grave.  
I fear this water  
Greater than I fear  
The lion-hearted sea;  
But I am drawn  
By its sullen langour  
Like a prostrate man  
Watching the groping hand of death  
With quick and fearful eye.

## TIPTON WAR MEMORIAL

They died! Some fiercely,  
Some with bitter tears;  
And who can tell with what dark fears  
They lost their grip on life,  
Or what sweet images of home  
Flashed in those dying eyes,  
Of Tipton streets and Tipton skies?

Their agony in foreign lands,  
They bore, that Tipton's skilful hands  
Should never work to the commands  
Of ruthless, heathen powers.

Britain cursed the sin of war,  
"We want no more:" was said,  
"Of pining for our youthful dead."  
Men etched their grief in stone,  
In cenotaphs that stood alone  
In city squares. On plates of brass  
Hung in stony halls, or where the grass  
Grew long in unattended places.

But Tipton raised its monolith  
Within the gateway of a park,  
Where trees talk together in the dark,  
And in the day, children run about and play.  
Where, after winter's stormy showers,  
There comes the resurrection of the flowers.



## THE DEVIL'S LOFFIN'

'E's never 'ad it ser good,  
The devil!  
On the level!  
'E's got moore fewls  
Fer tewls  
Than 'e ever thought 'e would,  
An' they cor see,  
Wi' wot glee,  
'E picks 'em up  
An' draps 'em in  
'Is rubbish bin.  
They thinkin' they'm clever,  
An' they never would believe,  
'E's bound ter deceive 'em,  
An' relieve 'em  
O' wot bit o' good  
They wuz born wi'.

Oh, 'e's loffin' alright,  
'Cos 'e's grippin' tight  
On the wairld.  
Bur' 'e cor shift it yet,  
An' carry it away.  
The weight o' goodness  
Still o'des it down  
Pretty well!  
It's lighter tho'  
Than it yewsta was  
Becos  
'E's got soo many fewls  
Liftin' wi' 'im.

Oh, 'e spins such a tairle,  
Some cor fairle  
Ter be took in;

But when they bin,  
They gets no prize!  
'E teks a rise  
Out of all 'is convairts;  
'E pervairts an' blinds;  
An' all the time  
'E keeps on loffin'  
An' scoffin'  
At them wots fewls enuff  
Ter listen tew 'is stuff.

'As 'e got yo', yet?  
If 'e aye, yo' con bet  
'E'll try tew  
An' if 'e 'as got yer  
GOD 'ELP YER!  
'Cos 'e wo'!



## LOOKIN' THREW THE WINDER

(Dedicated to working colleague Harry Daniels)

Lookin' threw the winder  
Is all wot's lef' ter me.  
It's terrible ter be alone  
When yo'm tairned eighty-three.

Lookin' threw the winder  
Ter see who's gooin' by  
Or jus' ter watch the big white clouds  
Goo rollin' dahn the sky.

Lookin' threw the winder,  
Ar wish as ar cud see  
The fairces o' the one's wot's gone,  
Wot meant ser much ter me.

Lookin' threw the winder,  
The Wren's Nest ar con see.  
Ar'll never walk them paths agen,  
Becos ar'm eighty-three.

Lookin' at the Wren's Nest,  
Wi' sunshine in its trees,  
Ar think o' when ar wuz a lad,  
A'dewin' wor' ar'd please.

Lookin' at the Wren's Nest,  
Ar know this time o' year,  
The butticups am bostin' aht,  
The bairdsong's loud an' clear.

Lookin' at the Wren's Nest  
Ar think o' Mary Jairne,  
The wench ar wed; but now 'er's jed;  
Theer's nothin' lef' but pairn.

Lookin' threw at twilight,  
Ar see yung folk abaht.  
They'n gor' all life in frunt o' them,  
But mar life's fadin' aht.

Lookin' threw the winder,  
Ar see me past goo by,  
Like lots o' faired photigraphs,  
When night is drawin' nigh.

Lookin' at the winder,  
All blacked aht wi' the night,  
Ar wunder whether, if ar sleep,  
Ar'll see the mornin' light.

Lookin' threw the winder,  
When dawn comes up at five,  
It meks me think, that in this street  
Ar'm th'on'y one alive.

Lookin' threw the winder,  
Soo airly in the day,  
I oftimes wish ar'd gor' a pal,  
Ter share me mornin' tay.

Lookin' threw the winder,  
The kids am runnin' by;  
Them kids ar brought intew this wairld,  
They never comin' nigh.

Lookin' threw the winder,  
Me eyes am growin' dim.  
The cairtins o' mar fadin' life  
Am drawin' slowly in.

Lookin' threw the winder,  
Ar wunder, when ar'm gone,  
Who'll look threw these same pairns o' glass,  
Another poor ode mon?



When 'e looks threw this winder,  
Ar wunder wor' 'e'll see?  
'E'll see the sairme things, theer's no doubt,  
But differently ter me.

Lookin' threw this winder,  
Theer's such a lot ter see,  
But all wot goz on in this wairld  
'Ull suen mean nowt ter me.

---

## PRISONS

**Don't make a prison for yourself**  
Of lies and deceit.  
Don't let jealousy and greed  
Make shackles for your feet.  
Don't allow some dirty stain  
To seep through your soul.  
Stay where God's voice can reach you;  
Where He can control.

**Don't make a prison for your mind**  
With ungodly creeds.  
Don't walk hopelessly and lost  
Where sinful horror breeds.  
Don't allow your faith in God  
To be laughed to scorn;  
He, with His power upholds you.  
His new day will dawn.

**Don't make a prison for your heart,**  
By letting in hate.  
Don't let ugly words or deeds,  
Bring sadness as your fate.  
Don't allow your spirit's flame,  
To splutter and dim;  
God holds the keys of freedom.  
Trust only in Him.

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