



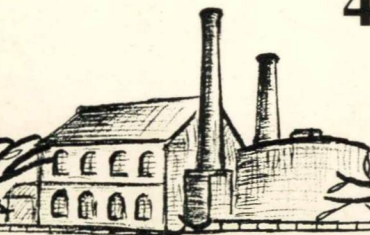
# FROM UNDER THE SMOKE

A selection of the poems  
and Black Country Ballads

of

J. WILLIAM JONES

40<sub>p</sub>



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.

A BLACK COUNTRY SOCIETY  
PUBLICATION

Produced by Harold Parsons  
Editor, The Blackcountryman

First Impression February 1972

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# From Under The Smoke

A selection of the poems  
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For Bryan  
With best regards.

JW

18<sup>th</sup> November 1992

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FOREWORD

History is probably the last thing one would associate with the Black Country where a long tradition of skill in brassbanding and spinning work was not matched by a similar skill in hammering and shaping words into rhythmic patterns and poetic form.

Cultural creativity was one of the results of the modernisation of the region and of its inhabitants. Only in recent years with the foundation of the Black Country

**This book is dedicated to every member  
of my family now and forever more.**

of the region's history. This anthology of poems by I. Weston is a valuable record of men and machinery, of the Black Country and its people, and of the way in which the people of the Black Country have lived and worked and thought and felt. It is a record of the people of the Black Country and the people they are.

WESTON HOMER

**The author wishes to thank the B.C.S.,  
for making possible the publication of  
this book.**

## FOREWORD

Poetry is probably the last thing one would associate with the Black Country, where a long tradition of skill in hammering and shaping metal was not matched by a similar skill in hammering and shaping words into rhythmic pattern and poetic form.

Cultural sterility was one of the results of the merciless exploitation of the resources of the region and of its inhabitants. Only in recent years, with the foundation of the Black Country Society, has there been any serious attempt to remedy this by reprinting old regional classics and principally by encouraging contemporary authors and poets.

One of the results of this policy is this anthology of poems by J. William Jones. His perceptive appraisal of men and machines, factories and foundries, and of almost every facet of Black Country life both old and new, has resulted in a collection of poems of such insight and discernment that they are good by any standards. To those of us who have a deep and abiding affection for the Black Country and its people they are magnificent.

WINSTON HOMER,  
Lecturer in English,  
Dudley Technical College.

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**APOSTLE OF INDUSTRIAL POWER**

Have you heard the roar of molten steel,  
The boom of mills, goaded by shaft and wheel,  
Whose mighty thrust, crushing the soul into imagined death,  
Streaks the pungent air with hot and oily breath?  
And can you man, who stands in fear of this,  
Watch my withered arms embrace; my cracked lips kiss,  
The sweat-soaked alters of this mammoth shrine,  
As though each avenue of power were mine?  
Does my god now seem mightier than yours,  
As when his thunderous voice throbs through these iron floors?

See now, this scar; long as a hand's span,  
These deeper wounds, that made me less a man,  
Than those who now, like Titans, grasp his might,  
And grapple with it day and night.  
These wounds are nothing, though they be deep,  
Harrowing my waking hours, troubling my sleep;  
I am his Apostle—this god of steel,  
Martyred for his sake; wracked on his giant wheel.

## THE COOLING TOWERS

With woolly heads of constant steam,  
The concrete towers all agleam,  
Dominate the industrial scene.  
With height, circumference and mien.  
Around their iron-girdered feet,  
The power houses hum and beat,  
Generating light and heat,  
For factory, home, and busy street.  
The goaded turbines shake the ground,  
And with a brittle, crackling sound,  
A million volts are pushed along,  
The wire tracks on high pylons slung.

I dower these structures so immense,  
With fictive charm, as when again,  
Along the heights of Dudley town,  
I view them from a distant crown;  
When winter sunlight floods the plain,  
And fancy is the poet's gain.  
I see a Grecian temple there,  
Tall pillared in the musky air;  
A hercules of noble girth,  
Giving pride of strength its birth,  
Harnessing all nature's power,  
To meet the challenge of the hour.

## THE STEEL MAN

He stands, completely unperturbed,  
Before the awful opening flower of crimson fire.  
He is unmoved by the radiant cataract  
Throwing its burning spray aloft.  
His glistening arms, thonged with sinew  
Seem made of gold, with golden hands;  
His wet brow flaked with golden strands.

Dwarfed by monstrous shape and noise  
He yet attains a god-like poise.  
Master of the burning moments  
King of the hell he has unleashed.

He well may stand, quietly unmoved  
Watching the wanton fury he controls;  
For in that stolid, silent, fragile frame,  
Stirs a greater force than fire and flame;  
A power that tossed the world in space,  
And drew from it the human race.

## MILLTOWN WATERWAYS

I, standing on iron bridges,  
Dream of clean rushing waters,  
Washing black rocks with white spume;  
Born in mountain fastnesses  
Where the sky touches the earth,  
Leaping to lower reaches,  
Through sun-drenched glades  
Redolent with pure nature,  
Lively mirror for colourscapes,  
Held in the heart of England.

I, standing on iron bridges,  
See oil and rust and flotsam,  
Languidly blending in swirls,  
After the passage of laden barges;  
Sullen green water lacking life,  
Stealing movement from wind  
Or the passing pull of craft;  
Mirror for drab landscapes;  
Foul grave, in lonely reaches,  
For discarded rottenness and filth.

## WHEELS IN THE MORNING

Jerked from their cold rigid slumber in oil beds,  
The pistons growl protest, the gears cry aloud,  
Then slowly, half circle, the great load moves forward,  
With shudder and sigh like a man after tears.  
Out through the gates as the faint light is dawning,  
Past the grey walls of the town's empty streets,  
Over the bridge where the water lies winking,  
Down where the steelmen are counting their heats.  
Up into Sedgley and over the high land,  
Into the green of our meadows and rills;  
Steel rings on steel as the load sways and trembles;  
The lorry rolls out to the sun wandering hills,  
Sand of the foundry seeps down through the floor boards,  
Is blown in the hedgerows and caught in the flowers,  
Through township and village the tyres hum their progress,  
Spinning their song to the slow-waking hours.

At last, at the docks in the full bloom of morning,  
The load comes to rest where the tall gantries swing;  
By midday the steel from a foundry in Milltown,  
Is stowed in a ship, and the loud sirens sing;  
The slap of the water; the spume crested backwash;  
Great bows cleave the ocean; white gulls spread their wings.

The lorry returns to the far-stretching highway,  
More leisurely now in the bright afternoon,  
Its wheels spin the sunlight, the gears move with ease;  
Fine product of Milltown is on the high seas.

## CLOSING OF TRINITY CHURCH—GREAT BRIDGE

There was a day  
When this old building  
Rang with song,  
And mighty was the throng  
That came to hear the Word  
Preached with fervour and devotion

As in that other time,  
On mighty wind  
The tongues of flame fell here,  
And found in many hearts  
A place in which to burn.

What do we learn  
From looking now  
Upon its desolation?  
Has God closed its doors,  
And shuttered up its windows  
In despair?

Ask yourself . . . !  
Does a seed  
Sown in fertile soil  
Cease to grow  
Because a door is shut somewhere  
Or here and there  
A stone may crumble?

Man cannot board God up  
Or bury Him in dust,  
Or sell Him out to commerce.

Trinity is closed!  
But God has gone His way  
About the streets of Tipton,  
Large and powerful  
In the hearts of men  
To grow, and thrive, and speak again.

## SEAGULLS OVER TIPTON

For weeks, we waited for the snow,  
But it did not come;  
Only the east wind, like a honed knife  
Cut across the flat industrial plain,  
Tearing the smoke from fummy stacks,  
Howling eerily through cracks,  
Bringing pain to old bones.

Then the gulls came,  
Borne on the shoulders of the wind,  
Rocking and gliding like blown scraps,  
On eddies of smoke drift,  
Filling the waste leagues of sky,  
With their sad and solitary cry,  
From the elemental world of sea.

Our slimy, sullen, winding waters,  
Barely crumpled by the wind,  
Mocked the birds scant wisdom,  
As they searched, in vain, for leaping fish,  
Or the crisping motion of a wave;  
Swooping under dark and rusting bridges;  
Perching on the rooftops of the town.

When the wind passed;  
High in the grey and ragged sky,  
Shrieking and wheeling, the gulls rose,  
Drawn westward in its wake;  
Hungry for the crash of waves;  
Lust for wind and sea together,  
Soon forgetful of our static world.

## THE LOST CITY

(Tipton)

Are there tombs of ancient kings,  
Wheeling bats and mummied things,  
Crumbling steps to eerie places,  
Rocks that look like human faces,  
Buried treasure locked in stone,  
Doors with secrets of their own ?

Is it Sodom or Gomorrah,  
With a tale of sinful horror;  
Are there 'dens' within its streets,  
Where the opium smoker meets  
With shambling comrades of his kind,  
Indulging orgies of the mind ?

No ! Just an intriguing name;  
'Lost City' ! Whence it came  
I do not know ! But all you'll find  
Are houses, pubs, and human kind,  
Shops, and children playing games;  
It lays no claim to lurid fames.

At least, it has no greater sin,  
Than that all humans wallow in;  
Far less historical renown,  
Than many a tiny English town.



## JACK HOLDEN GARDENS

There are sunken gardens  
Near Victoria Park  
Which bear his name;  
But is there then, no shame,  
That the moderns who use them,  
And at times so abuse them,  
Do not know, or care  
Of the honour vested there?  
His fame is not forgotten  
In hearts that quickly soften  
When we talk of heritage.  
The man still lives;  
But greater still,  
His prowess will live on  
As long as there's a Marathon  
To try the world's great runners;  
What a runner he was!

God-like in build,  
Every muscle willed  
By iron determination.  
Rhythmic co-ordination,  
Limb with perfect limb.  
Effortless in movement,  
Tireless for improvement,  
Even at his best.  
He was poetry in motion!  
Feet barely touching earth,  
Chest and shoulders square,  
Eyes bright with concentration,  
Muscles writhing in formation,  
As his speed grew ever fleeter,  
Danced their own iambic metre,  
To his great heart's beat.

**METAMORPHOSIS**

Sometimes, I think I can never die,  
 As I lie, on my back,  
 Feeling life so strong within me.  
 But then, at other times,  
 I almost faint with fear,  
 To think that I am here, so infinitesimal,  
 And nearly forty-five;  
 A dangerous age for men;  
 But then I shrug and say—  
 ' You're melancholy, mate today !  
 Perk up ! You're not ready for the grave,  
 You have so much to do;  
 Head up; shoulders square;  
 There, that's better !'  
 I step out in the sun;  
 Yes, life is splendid fun;  
 I feel that I can never die.

' My ! ' says my dearest friend,  
 ' You're not looking quite so well today !  
 You must take care, you know !  
 What about old so-and-so ?  
 Seemingly indestructable,  
 No grey hair,  
 Died suddenly yesterday,  
**AND ONLY FORTY-FIVE !'**

## BLIND

They see my stick,  
And slick !  
Across the busy road,  
Squeezing my arm,  
What charm !  
Some care;  
But there,  
That shines out,  
I almost see.

Some make a crack  
Behind my back;  
I see it all,  
Inside the dark;  
A white of teeth  
Beneath the eyes,  
And all the lies,  
They tell in hell;  
The brazen bell,  
Above the prayers.  
The parson swears  
Inside his head,  
And all he does in bed.

I see it all,  
Inside the dark;  
And more,  
Than all I ever saw before.

## MONDAY MORNING

Morning moves in upon my dreams  
Like a mischievous ghost;  
Grey, damp ectoplasm  
Hovering at my window,  
Mocking me with disturbing sounds;  
Revvng engines, clattering feet,  
Voices fully awake and too vital.

My brain jams with a feed-in  
Of too much lousy information.  
It is Monday morning !

The weekend, like an oasis visited,  
Recedes, and becomes a bright mirage.  
The desert stretches, unconquerable  
And unending.  
Monday morning has no horizon.

## NIGHTMARE

I wake up in the dead of night,  
And yesterday  
Is a thousand years away.

I am two persons  
Torn apart by a dream.  
Macabre fingers have been groping for my soul;  
The jaws of vampires have sucked at my flesh.  
Now, they scratch and clamour at the windows of my mind.  
Sleep again—they say,  
Sleep, and we will come to you.

I turn the other way,  
My wife groans, as I press  
By body close to her warmth.

She is my protection  
Against the monsters of my mind.

## FACTORY FOLD

Jenny is gone, who kissed so gladly,  
Jenny is gone from Factory Fold,  
And the old gate swings in the night wind so sadly,  
And ever since then the house is cold  
And the dust has settled on Factory Fold.

Factory Fold is a crumbling ruin,  
Windows agape and the garden bare,  
And ghosts call out to the smoky moonlight,  
Old ghosts that knew her, calling her there,  
Ghosts searching long in the bleak night air.

Ghosts that call, but get no answer,  
Factory Fold, and life, are done,  
Wind and nettle for music and dancer.  
and not one pale rose left for the sun,  
Not one pale rose; no, not one.

## THE OLD COTTAGE

They demolished the old cottage  
Twenty years ago;  
Nothing to show now but these few stones  
Bedded where the dull weeds grow.  
It was such a pretty cottage;  
Roses, and a few apple trees,  
All these were torn up when the bulldozers came  
Flexing their iron hands with ruthless ease.  
But my eyes still see,  
Here, where these tall flats stand,  
Austere and grey above the land,  
Warm firelight through an open door,  
Oak beams above a quarried floor.

And, if you should come here and stand,  
When the night sinks in its shroud,  
When the traffic stills, and the night air thrills,  
With moonglow seeping through the clouds,  
You may hear voices from another age,  
Quiet and gentle as the turning page  
Of some old book,  
And if you look, longingly like me,  
You too may even see  
Warm firelight through an open door,  
Oak beams above a quarried floor;  
May hear ripe apples falling from young trees,  
And catch a breath of roses on the breeze.

**PARK LANE**  
(Tipton)

You'll see no top hats here,  
Unless someone is getting spliced,  
And even then . . . a trilby or a cap  
Perhaps! But like as not, no hat at all;  
Just hair, shifting in the breeze,  
And the bridegroom steadying his knees,  
While someone quips 'Yo've dun it now!'

You'll see no Bentleys here!  
Drawing up in the silent hours,  
With bejewelled occupants, sable wrapped,  
Fresh from the theatre or some Ritzy bar,  
Slightly tipsy with champagne;  
But, in the rain, there may be seen,  
Some lovelorn chap, walking with his queen

You'll get no caviar here!  
'Who wants it annyroad?' they'd say,  
'That Russian stuff! 'Ar've 'ad enuff o' that,  
Aforer ar try it! Gi' me fish and' chips  
Or peas; pigs puddin' or cheese,  
Good 'olesome fittle, that's what we like,  
But caviar . . . ar'd goo on strike!!'

You'll find no hotels here!  
A pub or two, with lots of beer,  
And lively talk . . . some warm and friendly folk,  
A church, with clean cut spire; a school,  
Some shops; nothing to call fine.  
But east or west, this Park Lane is mine!  
One feels significant down here.



## DERELICT FOUNDRY

The foundry, vast in its desolation, is haunted  
With the hollow murmers of departed time.  
Grey phantoms of waning light  
Move fitfully about the dusty floor.  
Echoes from the past  
Seem to linger where the rusting girders  
Thrust into the distant roof,  
And there is that yearning emptiness  
One finds in vacant places  
Where men once lived and toiled together.

Could one share, in this unconsecrated air,  
A feeling of sanctity,  
As in some cool and spacious church,  
Where the deepest passions of the soul  
Have risen, blended and distilled?  
For here, there is no alter,  
No stained-glass saint, no clean white stone;  
Yet suddenly, one feels constrained to kneel  
In the grey sand and flaking rust,  
And sense a superb fitness in the fact  
That one should feel His presence here,  
Amidst this mass of ruinous gear,  
Where once men wrought with glowing steel,  
Defined its shape on lathe and wheel,  
And rich in strength made richer still,  
The spirit of toil, the power of skill.

## BIG GEORGE THE STRIKER

When ar wuz a kid ar'd goo down the forge,  
Ter tek me dad's dinner, and' ter see Big George;  
Theer wuz six mighty anvils set theer in a row,  
Six great big fires as 'ud quickly blow,  
Inta such a rairdiant 'ell-fiyer 'eat,  
As the sweat 'ud squeeze out from yer yed ter yer feet.

It 'ud run dahn the fairces o' them as med chairne,  
And' drap off theyre noses agen an' agen,  
As they plucked out the iron from bairnin' red gleeds,  
An' the scairle 'ud fly out like bright bosted beads,  
When the 'ommers cum dahn wi' a smakettysmack;  
Them wun good days fer me an' ar wish they wuz back.

Big George the striker, 'e'd gor' arms like logs,  
All 'airy an' brown, an' 'e weared moleskin togs;  
'E swung a great 'ommer ah tho' it wor theer,  
An' manny's the time ar've felt full o' fear,  
As the yed might fly off an' knock some'dy flat,  
But George wor a mon ter dew annythin' like that.

'E yewsed ter remind me o' that bloke nairm Thor,  
As we lairned on at schewl, bur' ar do'e know wot for,  
Yo' know, 'im as throwed a big 'ommer abaht,  
Whenever 'e'd gorra sort somebody out,  
Big George wuz like Thor in 'is figga an' fairce,  
Bur' 'is 'ommer wor magic an' stopped in its plairce.

'E'd stewp dahn an' tickle me under me chin,  
Wi' them great 'onds of 'is, an' then 'e'd begin  
A' strikin' the links while 'is mairte 'eld 'em fast,  
An' ar'd watch the bright fragmints o' scairlie flying past.  
An' then 'e'd say 'P'raps when yo' grow up yo'll be

A mon as meks chairn like yer fairther an' me !'  
But when ar growed up ar went tew a schewl  
Wot taiched me tew act like a gent (or a fewl);  
Annyroad, if ar'd wanted ter wairk meckin' chairn,  
I 'ad'na the strength nor the pluck, 'cos it's plain,  
Yo'n gorra be born a reel mon fer that job,  
Yo' do'e need smart clothes nor a posh-spaikin' gob.

Now them wun the days when o'de England wuz great;  
'Cos men 'a' ter wairk then fer wot they got t'ate,  
An' wot's mooer they took a reel pride in theyre wairk,  
Big George wud a'thought it a crime jus' ter shairk.  
We do'e see 'is sort in ower country terday,  
They wantin' saft jobs now, but double the pay.

Big George 'ad retired when ar growed tew a mon,  
When ar sid 'im agen well, it put me one on,  
'E wuz on'y a lickle chap abaht five foot eight,  
An' me six foot tew—well, ar felt pretty great,  
Till ar looked at 'is 'onds an' 'is fairce, then ar sid,  
'E still wuz the giant, and' me still the kid.

## 'WOMANLICKED'

Yo' con see 'um on a Sat'dee,  
A'wundrin' roun' like sheep,  
Theyre fairces lung an' mis'nable,  
Theyre eyes arf shut wi' sleep;  
A'looded up wi' parcils,  
An' shappin' bags an' all,  
While theyre missuses stand gassin'  
Aroun' the markit stall.

It meks me sad ter see 'em theer,  
A'wairstin' arf theyre life,  
Jus' draggin' round' wi' shappin' bags,  
Ter please a naggin' wife;  
That's why these 'ere men snuffit  
Much suener than they should,  
'Cos the treatment o' theyre womenfolk  
'As nipped 'em in the bud.

A pal o' mine nairme 'Ikey Joones  
Who's arf the size o' me,  
Wairks 'arder wickends when 'e's 'um  
Than when 'e moulds wi' we,  
It's 'Will yo' fatch the groc'ry?'  
An' 'Goo an' get the maite!'  
Then 'Dew that bowl o' washin' up!'  
No wunder 'e's lost weight.

Ar've 'ad a bit o' common sense,  
Ar'm 'appy an' carefree;  
Mar mother goz aroun' the shaps,  
'Er's got respec' fer me.  
Why on'y th' other Sat'dee,  
'Er said 'Yo' sit yer down,  
An' peel them few pertairters,  
While ar goo up the town.'

An' when 'er cum back wi' the bags  
Ar jumped up right away,  
Bur 'er says 'Do'e yo' fret yerself  
Jus' mek a cup o' tae.'  
Ar went ter cook the dinner,  
Bur 'er says 'No yo' wo',  
Yo' goo an' mek the beds, mar mon,  
This aye no job fer yo !'

Why, bless yer life, 'er's shappin' now,  
An' ar'm 'ere nice an' snug;  
Ar've on'y gorra dust the rewm,  
An' sweep the blewmin' rug,  
An' when ar've dun the washin',  
Ar'll ger' all shairved an' slicked  
An' goo'n goo up the pictures,  
'Cos I aye womanlicked.

## MILLTOWN IN WINTER

Milltown is wearing her grey shawl,  
The one with flecks of amber in it,  
And there is a pinched look,  
About her strong but kindly face.

In the dark mornings, she stands under awnings  
Of shops, to dip her hands  
In the bright pools of light.  
Or she will look at herself,  
In the dim mirrors of wet pavements.

There are people everywhere,  
Still merry with beer  
And the aftermath of Christmas;  
Blowing warm breath into cold hands.  
But they do not look at her,  
Because her face is sad,  
And she is wearing her grey shawl.

They do not seem to care,  
When here and there, a dull tear,  
Blows in their faces from her eyes,  
Nor when she draws her shawl closer,  
And moans with cold at street corners.

But see ! Just for you and me,  
She has changed for a brief while,  
Into her deep blue winter gown,  
With glittering sequins up and down,  
And with one bright star brooch,  
Shining at her breast:

And there is singing,  
And the whispered fragments of gay talk.

But she will not be gay for long,  
Withdrawing soon into her grey shawl,  
And over all, her melancholy falls again,  
In the threads of cold rain,  
Outside closed shops and dark curtained windows.

## PIZZICATO IN A SLOW MOVEMENT

Night creature walking  
The faded street  
With footless tread,  
Or the dread  
Monotonous drip  
Of water  
Wearing away stones;  
My brain takes up  
Your measure,  
Echoless in corridors  
Where time narrows  
To twilight gloom;  
The boom of emptiness  
Fills my ears.

Violins wail  
'Cellos groan;  
The majestic horn  
Heralds distances;  
Drums command,  
Trombones force  
Indecent noises.

A crowd scene,  
In conflict;  
A world symphony,  
And underneath it all,  
The awful beat  
Of time.

## THE STORM

As though under the brassy sky,  
I was lost,  
Through back streets of time I moved,  
and caught a sight,  
Of children, playing where the gutters ran  
With oil-flecked rainwash,  
full of golden light,  
Happily, with lively cries,  
the children sprang,  
Urging their twigs and matchbox boats along,  
Till pale skins glowed, and all  
the alleys rang,  
Like bellchambers that hold  
a spiritual song.  
Then thunder clouds rolled down  
their iron doors,  
Crushing the groping fingers  
of the sun,  
Until a darkness heavier than night,  
Stifled all the street with gloom;  
The children, forgetting  
all their fun,  
Now scattered, whispering,  
each towards his home.  
Blades of lightning cut and thrust,  
Along the steel grey ramparts  
of the sky,  
The sullen god of storms was stirred again,  
Who rolled and stretched his  
montrous girth,  
Flinging his vivid arm towards the earth;



The crash and crackle of its light,  
Burned in recognition along the height  
  above the town,  
Where skeletal pylons wandered down,  
Their wires aglow with deadly power;  
And in that hour, four inches of rain fell,  
Turning the streets into a gulping hell,  
Of brown and creamy foaming flood,  
That choked the drains  
  and cracked their pipes like wood.

But through the heavens at length  
  another song,  
Came with the wind that pushed  
  the clouds along,  
A song of peace borne on the wings of birds,  
That feel the presence of the sun,  
  as mystic men,  
Feel the presence of the soul again.  
Those monstrous clouds retreated far away,  
Fringing the horizon of that waning day,  
With a range of mountains  
  measureless to man,  
Their golden ice-caps  
  numberless to scan.

The children thronged back to the street,  
Stirring with their eager feet,  
The steaming flotsam carried  
  by the flood,  
That swept where now they ran or stood,  
And as their voices echoed to the sky,  
I, passing on through time,  
  went wandering by,  
While their dear Black Country, and mine,  
Looked lovingly upon us all  
  with face benign.

## CALEB'S GOLD

Theer's rich folks up Gornal an' Rewiton road,  
They rairkin' it in an' they keepin' it co'ed;  
Ter see some a'walkin' about in the street,  
Yo'd think as they cud'na buy shoes fer theyre feet,  
But theer aye many short of a thousan' er tew,  
Yo' should see theyre big 'ouses an' all wi' a view.

Yo'n 'eared of o'de Caleb whose donkey took fright,  
An' tipped th'ode mon's salt blocks ter left an' ter right,  
Well, Caleb wuz rich, tho' 'e never ler'on,  
But one night 'e sot in 'The Strugglin' Mon',  
An' 'eared some blokes talkin' who said they'd bin toed,  
As the Gov'mint wun pouncin' on folks who'd got gold.

Soo Caleb scairped nearer an' listened some mooere,  
A' spillin' 'is bitter all ower the flooer,  
An' from wot 'e cud gather, it looked pretty grim,  
'Cos the Gov'mint 'ud shewerly be down after 'im;  
Wi' all them gold sov'rins stoored under the bed,  
Soo 'e started ter figure things out in 'is yed.

These blokes kep' on talkin' an' suppin' up beer,  
Theyre tongues gerrin' lewse till it suen become clear,  
As one er tew on 'em 'ad gold stoored away,  
Kep' ready in cairse of a rainy day,  
Soo they reckoned, nex' day, they wun gooin' ter goo down,  
An' tek all theyre gold ter the bonk in the town.

Then Caleb rushed 'um ter Big Kath'rin' 'is wife,  
An' said 'Ar've 'eered summat wot's shortened mar life!  
Yo' know them theer sov'rins wot wee'n stoored away,  
Well they'm gooin' in the Bonk wi'out fairther delay;  
Ar've 'eared as the Gov'mint an' med it a law,  
As folks wot's got gold coins cor 'ave 'em no mooere.'

The very nex' mornin' they gor' out the cart,  
Gid Pongo the donkey fower carrots ter start,  
Then they airved up the bath wi' the sov'rins in,  
An' trotted away at a pretty good spin,  
At the Bonk Caleb said ter the mon at the grill,  
'Ar've brought me gold sov'rins ter put in yore till !'

The Manijer cum, 'e says 'Ah, let me see !  
How many gold sov'rins sir—one, two or three ?'  
O'de Caleb tairned roun' an' 'e loffed wi' Big Kath,  
'Theer's ower five thousan' out theer in a bath !'  
The manijer gawped an' become a changed mon,  
'E put all 'is poshest cumflewshushniss on;

'My dear sir !' says 'e 'Pray forgive me, please do !  
I'll get the red carpet put down jus' fer you.'  
Then 'e called ter the chap sittin' theer at the grill,  
'Pray fetch that theer bath from the cart will you Will ?'  
The bath wuz 'aived in an' the gold wuz tipped out,  
An' the sun come right on it an' flashed it about.

The manijers mouth weatered theer at the sight,  
While they counted it out jus' ter see it wuz right.  
They counted it once, an' they counted it twice,  
Then Caleb 'e counted it, meckin' it thrice,  
'Five thousan' five 'undered's wot oughta be 'ere !'  
Says Caleb 'Theer's tew 'undered missin' ar fear !'

Soo Caleb went white fer a momint er tew,  
An' the manijer's fairce tairned tew colours o' blew,  
They booth scratched theyre yeds wheer they dae itch at all,  
While the customers waited all fummin' wi' gall;  
Then Caleb cried 'Damn an' set fyer tew it Kath !  
Ar know wot we'n done now—we'n brought the wrung bath!'

## JOBY JACK'S GARDIN

Joby kep' 'is little gardin as bewtiful as Edin,  
An' it 'ad as many flowers in,  
Becos 'e kep' on weedin'  
Ter keep the muck an' rubbish out,  
An' 'e did it wi' 'is mind,  
That's wot med it all ser wonderful,  
'Cos Joby Jack wuz blind.

'E'd gorra lawn as smewth an' flat as onny billiard tairble,  
'E'd sit theer on a summer's day,  
Whenever 'e wuz airble,  
'E'd look an' mewve 'is yed around,  
Jus' like as 'e cud see,  
Espeshully when the bairds cum down,  
An' whistled in 'is tree.

One day a fella walkin' by who'd 'eered o' Joby's gardin,  
Stopped lookin' at the luvly flowers,  
An' says, 'Are beg yer pardin,  
But wot's the yewse o' dewin' this;  
Yo' connna see it caw yer?'  
Then Joby loffed an' says 'Si' down!  
Ar'll just explairn it for yer.

Yer see I allwiz growed nice flowers lung fower ar lost me sight,  
Ter gi' it up when ar went blind,  
Dae seem ter me quite right,  
Ar feel me way aroun' me soil,  
Ter pluck up an' ter sow;  
Me nose 'elps me ter see me flowers,  
An' then, o' course, theer's yo'!'

'What's mean?' the fella says, 'Why chap, yo' do'e know me  
from Mundee!'

'Ar doe!' says Joby, 'Bur ar knowed  
Yo'd cum down this road one day,  
An' if this o'de bit o' gardin  
'Ad bin a wilderness,  
Yo'd a'gone by wi'out lookin' once,  
An' that yo' must confess!'

'Oh ar! Yo'n said it theer mar mon!' the fella says  
'Ar'll grant yer!'

Then Joby says: 'If ar wor blind  
Ar doubt if ar should want yer!  
But now ar grows a lot moore flowers  
Fer folks who'n gor' a mind,  
Ter stop an' 'ave a look at 'em,  
An' talk ter one whose blind.'

## DAWN MUSE

Dark mill men climb  
Up the steep street,  
And with their feet,  
The rain keeps time.

My bright dreams wane;  
A car lamp flashes,  
A wet gust lashes  
Across my pane.

No bright clean homes  
But concrete towers;  
The dawn sky glowers  
With sulphurous fumes.

What dreams can arise?  
The traffic groans;  
Life stirs and moans;  
The town's heart cries.

Works sirens start  
Their doleful wail;  
Train hooters hail  
At poles apart.

Merciless toil  
In toxic air,  
Men's arms aglare  
With sweat and oil.

Dark mill men climb  
Up the steep street,  
And with their feet,  
The rain keeps time.

## THE LEVEL CROSSING

In leaping sound the notes are borne,  
The clarion call of a two-toned horn,  
And we sit and wait in gasping cars,  
Or stand expectant at the wooden bars;  
Then suddenly with flash and roar  
The air is torn apart, and more,  
A furious throbbing steel on steel,  
An iridescent stream of wheel  
Rocks the earth beneath our feet,  
And thunders up and down the street;  
A blur of faces pressed on glass,  
Whipping ropes of light that pass  
In furious kaleidoscopic spin.

Like a maddened giant's indrawn breath,  
The train growls on, and leaves a death  
Of senses suspended in the quivering air.  
And now, the gates draw back, and there  
With a sluggish movement life moves on  
Over the road the giant strode upon.

The distant horn calls onward into time;  
Yet other triumphs, more than this sublime,  
Will draw its frantic length to distant towns;  
And the blur of faces hurled at speed,  
Will take on features, smiles, and feed  
Into threads of life where they are known,  
And greeted, loved, and called their own.

## OBLITERATION

On the index finger of my left hand,  
Is a small white scar,  
Shaped like a sickle.

Forty years ago it was a deep wound,  
Caused by a sharp knife,  
Slithering off soap.

I was a child, dreaming with my right hand;  
Cutting a wide arch,  
In a soapy tower.

There was a lot of blood, dark as old wine,  
Running in thin streaks,  
Down my trembling palm.

All the dangers of carving doors in soap,  
Were brought home to me,  
On that wayward blade.

Now, the index finger of my left hand,  
Has grown long and stout;  
The scar grows smaller.

One day, the wide and gloomy shelves of death,  
Will hold my story,  
Where none may read it.

And where the symbol of obliteration,  
Is a small white scar,  
Shaped like a sickle.



## END OF SUMMER

White hands fumble in the clouds  
Tearing at the grey billowy mass;  
Blood spurts and spreads  
Turning to gold in a heavenly idyll.  
In factory streets, smaller shabbier fires  
Flame up from cupolas,  
And wailing hooters sour the evening air.  
We chase fuming buses  
    who swallow us whole and feel sick.  
Above the glory of the west, jet planes,  
Silent as crayons, draw vivid lines,  
Like vandals daubing on a masterpiece.

Slovenly waters exchange winks  
With slimy walls and black bridges:  
In the old part of the town  
Pensioners shuffle around grimy shops.

Night falls like an old film, blurred  
And greenish, spangling upon the cloth caps  
Of trudging miners, and the moon hangs, smouldering  
In a pink cauldron, dripping fire on the town.

There is a hint of frost  
    In the lonely sound of trains.  
It is cold enough for mulled beer  
    Or a drop of the hard stuff.

Brick and slate and stone  
Like the mottled vistas of wastelands  
Misty with acrid gases.  
    This is our breeding ground;  
We swarm here, and are crushed also.  
It is the end of summer, and our spring is far away.

## 'GONE AWAY'

Quite suddenly, one day,  
I remembered the address;  
But even more, the house,  
Clearly defined; superimposed  
Upon the turbulent screen  
Of my mind's flea-pit.

A dismal cul-de-sac,  
Hidden from the factories  
By a giant concrete prison  
Of slotted human beings  
Called Shelley Tower,  
Because the local council  
Went all poetic that year.

The house was third down,  
No. 22, Rolling Mill Close;  
So close, you could hear,  
On a clear frosty night,  
The rumble of the rolls,  
The shatter of sheet steel.

The houses slated heads,  
Were thick with air-borne soot  
Like dandruff on dirty scalps;  
The windows were smudgy;  
Each door's skin flaked off.  
The very air you breathed,  
was grey with the effluvia  
Of cremated iron ore.

There had always been the girl,  
Not forgotten like the house,  
But put away in the soft wool,  
Of my subconscious mind,  
To be brought out at length,  
And looked at in a new context,  
A span of twenty years.

As I wrote the letter,  
She came, like the sun's fingers  
Groping through rain clouds.  
Our intimacy of that time,  
Brought back, vivid as flowers,  
Tightened my groin and scalp.  
I spoke on to the paper  
As though her lips were under my pen.

In three days, the letter,  
Tossed like a boomerang,  
Returned on my checkered mat,  
Flat, as though it had been  
Stepped on by many feet.  
Scrawled on either side  
In cold fragmented blue,  
'Gone away! Gone away!'

There was a wild, sweet, time,  
When these harsh final words,  
Would breach a dam of tears;  
But now, in these slow years,  
I turn the packet over sadly,  
As I have often turned my hopes  
And fears; all passion spent,  
I find that youth, and all it meant,  
Is 'Gone away! Gone away!'

## ROBIN

People say you are like me,  
And make the usual jokes;  
And I see myself in you,  
As I was at your age;  
You have turned back a page  
Or two, of life's book for me.

More lean, and more vital  
Than I was at your age,  
You are far more beautiful;  
Though, at times, you display  
My violence, in play,  
And towards those you despise.

You tell lies and you steal;  
These too, were part of me.  
You speak your mind openly,  
And those who are Christian  
Are quick to mark your faults  
And hint at their origin.

I think you will inherit  
My keen perceptiveness,  
And this will hurt you at times,  
When you study others,  
And see their shallowness,  
And their monstrous pretences.

Sometimes I am afraid  
That I shall not see you  
Grow into a lofty man.  
Remember, if you can  
To spurn being saintly:  
That's not for you, nor for me.

You will see those who are,  
And they will sicken you;  
Be a true man, and trust God,  
But do not preach to men,  
Or mix with those who do.  
Your quest in life is to live.

## DON'T BE TOO HARD ON SPIKY . . .

He was just bored, poor lamb !

Cutting off the cat's head  
Was only his way of protesting;  
And then . . .  
When he kicked poor old grannie  
In the groin,  
He was just working off  
His youthful exuberance;  
And let us not forget,  
That breaking into St. Jude's  
And smashing all the saints,  
Was his way of saying  
That nobody loves him,  
(He's not very good with words),  
So . . .  
Don't be too hard on Spiky !

After all, in this wicked world,  
Where a boy like him  
Is harassed and reviled  
By those who uphold the law  
And believe in good moral behaviour,  
Where would he be,  
Without a do-gooder or two,  
And a stalwart band or two,  
Of permissive teachers ?

Don't be too hard on Spiky !

## GUITAR

Here lies a Guitar,  
Its drug-crazed strings  
Still buzzing from the last  
GREAT NUMBER; all about Christ's  
Come-down from being God  
To just another guy  
With a beard, who demonstrated  
Along with his bearded mates  
About the way things were  
And are, and evermore shall be.  
GREAT NUMBER ! We all clap  
Out the beat. Christ drank  
Like a fish, down the local  
And could spin a yarn or two  
In his cups. Great stuff !  
The song says he was the greatest  
Communist of all time,  
Not God, like we all thought,  
GREAT NUMBER ! We all clap,  
With our drug-crazed hands.

## POOR JOE

### THE IDLER

Beatifically, he smokes, dreams, and watches  
Sometimes turning an unshaven cheek  
To me; with smile and nod  
In lieu of speech;  
I try to reach him; to breach  
The thick grey mists  
Of his dreaming brain:  
But each time, I must return again  
To make speech for both of us,  
The weather; his pipe,  
The foolishness of men who work;  
These titillate his tongue;  
Topics as soon exhausted  
As his untried energies.  
He is no more perturbed,  
By the passage of wasted time,  
Than the twig,  
Now fallen in the foetid slime,  
Of the old mill pool.

## POOR JOE

Poor, funny little Joe,  
Slept heavily you know !  
Slept the old, tired sleep,  
Alone, and very deep,  
Sunk in his own dark,  
In a hut by the park,  
Where the gillies slept,  
Young, and more adept,  
At waking with the dawn,  
All sun-slopped on the grass.

Joe; funny in his sleep,  
So deep, so very low,  
In his tumbled little bed,  
Slept the sky from blue,  
To deep cold starlit hue,  
And back again into the day,  
No-one caring, or near,  
To say, ' Joe, look here,'  
' There is food, hot,  
And tea in a pot,  
And a bit of talk,  
For the mind to feed on.'

Poor, funny little Joe,  
Slept heavily you know,  
Slept the old, tired, sleep,  
Alone, and very deep.  
Slept his dreams away,  
Into an endless day.  
Slept his flesh to dust,  
His little bed to rust,  
And no-one came to wake,  
With murmurings of love,  
Or happy smiles above,  
The old, sad face.



### NIMROD BY ELGAR

He is very tall; the sun his halo.  
His arms are thick, and brown as wood  
Deep in his eyes are years of wisdom;  
When he walks, the stars whisper,  
Tree talk and forests sing;  
The lightning proffers him a sword;  
Stony clouds wring silver tears  
To wash his sculptured brow.

The hunter, who hunts no more,  
Goes slowly to his grave,  
And all the fearful creatures of the woods,  
Prick their ears at the sound of the earth sighing.

## JON

Sometimes, caught unawares,  
Your face is so beautiful  
That I cannot bear  
My monstrous crime  
Of bringing you here  
To face a sordid truth  
That the intermediary  
Of your advent into human life  
Is such a poor slug of a man.  
One day you will know,  
And understand, not all things,  
But enough; the shams and pretences,  
The delusions of grandeur:  
All that makes me what I am.

You love me now,  
More than you love God.  
I am your God, your protector;  
But oh! such a fearful God.  
My life is fraught with fear,  
The great abiding fear  
Of inadequacy. The terror  
Of always being one step behind  
Those other gods; their offspring,  
Your friends; bright as stars,  
Reflecting glory; I have none  
But love, and its constant pain.

If that is still enough  
When the focus of your mind  
Has steadied on the rock of life,  
Look down on me, the old God,  
With Valhalla in his eyes,  
And I will look up at your beauty,  
Thankful that, in spite of me,  
You have reached the stars.

## MY PARENTS

With us  
There has always been rapport,  
But not, thank God, achieved  
By harsh repression, nor tired passivity.  
In need  
Of solace, I have recourse  
To memories as warm  
As the sweet afterglow of late summer.  
The home;  
An oasis, cool as milk,  
Benign with sun-drenched stone,  
Always drew me back from wayward foolishness.  
I lived  
Under a fine influence,  
That sprang from great warm hearts,  
Constant as the measured beat of tall old clocks.  
The years  
Have wrapped us in their tendrils,  
Till now we are enmeshed,  
You in old age, and I in solemn fear;  
My fear,  
Is for the breaking idyll;  
Our time is running out,  
And the golden page turns on our story.  
My thanks,  
For bringing me into life.  
Do not mourn what is past,  
The best things are reproduced in heaven.

## ANOTHER SUMMER

Another summer dies slowly,  
Writhing with heat and violence  
On a bed of sharp spikes.  
At the heart of all things,  
There is persistent irritation,  
Stabbing the aching sores  
Of a war-weary world;  
And men are drying  
For immature causes.  
Blood is flowing freely  
For aims that are not high.  
At the very core of life,  
The maggots are breeding  
With frightening fecundity,  
Spreading their rottenness  
Into our garnered fruits,  
Good men are capitulating,  
Shedding their beliefs  
As great trees shed leaves  
With the first pinch of Autumn.

Another summer dies slowly,  
And there is no joy left  
In remembering.

## MORNING MUSIC

While it is still dark  
The first uneven note  
Ascends, and levels out,  
And a thousand dreams are broken  
In bedrooms round about,  
Then nearer, a more ponderous key,  
Creates a grotesque harmony,  
And at once, as though athirst  
To achieve a raucous symphony,  
The iron throats  
Of all the factory hooters,  
Hurl their music at the fading stars.

One feels engulfed  
In a wave of strange haunting sounds,  
Even after each note has fallen and died  
Somewhere out there,  
Amidst the jungle of sooted factory stalks.

Then, as sun in smoke  
Spreads its dusky glow  
Chasing night behind its heavy doors,  
The feet of men,  
March out into the day again;  
Voices rise and fall about the street,  
The heart of Milltown swells its beat,  
Making music for the soul and mind,  
The thrilling rhythm of mankind.

MORNING MUSIC

I AM—(i)

I am a liar; a cheat,  
Slow of foot, and fleet.  
I am a beggar; a king.  
I weep; and I sing.  
I am a killer; I save.  
I lie in the grave.  
I am a robber; I give  
To the poor. I live  
In a penthouse; a hovel.  
I command, and I grovel.  
I preach, and blaspheme.  
I am a fact, and a dream.

My dressing room. Take a seat;  
See the man complete,  
Behind the paint. I wonder!

Am I acting even that?

**I AM—(ii)**

I walk the wastelands  
 Like a god, and the spirits  
 Creep behind their rocks  
 To watch me as I bestride  
 Deep crevices, and crumble  
 The lips of great ravines  
 With the horny callous  
 Of my heel; I speak  
 The language of the clouds  
 As they collide and crash  
 About the skies. The lightning  
 Is my spear. The rain  
 My sweat, wrung freely  
 In the labour of the storm.  
 I am the wind that bends  
 Great trees; the darkness  
 That covers life with death.  
 I am the music that stirs  
 The heart with longings.  
 I am the kiss that warms  
 The lips of the world.  
 I am the dream that ends  
 When day comes leaping  
 From the burning east.  
 I am the song that children sing;  
 I am the pain that women bear.  
 I am war and peace.  
 I am a fool, and wise.  
 In me the burning stars,  
 Glitter like broken glass.  
 I am a man; I am the world.

## MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS

Near four busy streets converging,  
Wheels and feet in four ways surging,  
Stands a structure of imposing frame,  
With 'Municipal Buildings' as its name;  
Here Milltown's statesmen once held sway,  
Guiding the fortunes of the day;  
Deciding issues of great note,  
Without a flutter of the throat,  
And spending hours in hot debate,  
On matters of a lowly state.  
Here they swaggered by the hour,  
Or staggered with the weight of power.  
Their end was watch with glee by some,  
But others marked some good they'd done,  
In spite of all their limitations,  
And often through procrastinations.

Now all is still within its halls,  
The dust has filmed about its walls,  
The chamber, where so much was wrought,  
Is full of waiting silence, fraught  
With echoes of those noisy days.

Rumour has it that, in time,  
This building with its fame sublime,  
Will be an annexe for a College,  
Where young technicians will gain knowledge,  
Of wheel, and pinion, and gear;  
The noise of motors will sound here,  
Where once the human voice held sway.

But is it possible to say  
That these old walls will feel abused,  
When for so long they had been used,  
To raucous shoutings, and the hammer,  
Futile phrases, and bad grammer,  
Lusts for power in hearts vibrating,  
Envy, pride, (and love) rotating,  
In a complex political machine.



## DUDLEY ZOO

### VERSES FOR THE CHILDREN

#### CRANES

There are cranes and cranes !  
I've gone to pains,  
To make this clear.

Those that point up to the sky,  
And wave their arms about on high,  
Live on petrol, oil and grease,  
And go to sleep on some flat piece,  
Of building site or factory floor.

If I saw one of these in flight,  
I think I'd get an awful fright,  
I'd just give it the bird, then duck !

These other cranes are all renowned,  
For being, when they're off the ground,  
The very largest birds that fly.  
Their names are **Demoiselle and Crowned,**  
And then there's **Sarus**—giant bird,  
Whose voice in **Indian** plains is heard.  
But these are only just a few,  
For there are other species too,  
Too numerous to mention here.

Of these birds you need have no fear.

They're really very peaceful souls,  
Who make their nests in earthy holes,  
And breed where quiet waters gleam.

## FLAMINGOES

Eyes Down ! Look In !

It's number five,  
Now look alive.

Here's number six,  
You're in a fix.

All on its own,  
Is number one.

Your sweating then,  
On number ten ?

Now don't feel blue,  
Here's number two.

**BINGO !**

Imagine the flamingo **playing bingo,**  
**strike me pink !**

Its just as blooming ludicrous,  
As some things done by folks like us.

## ELEPHANT

There's something I have got to do,  
I wonder what it is?  
I've got to tie a knot somewhere,  
I really don't know why, but there;  
So many things to keep in mind,  
It really is a frightful bind,  
To have to keep remembering,  
**No wonder I forget !**

## THE BACTRIAN CAMEL

The Bactrian camel has two humps,  
To store his extra fuel,  
He also grows a woolly coat,  
In case the weather's cruel.  
For up and down the Russian Steppes  
The weather ever changes,  
He meets with snow or burning sun,  
Upon those mighty ranges.  
He's built to work in any weather,  
And he's a good lad altogether.

## TOUCAN

Toucan ! It's a funny name,  
And you could hardly be to blame,  
For wondering how it came about.

I've wondered too, and—silly thought,  
The beak gave clues to what I sought;  
It really is the size of two,  
Although it's hollow, weak, and you,  
Need not be frightened by its measure,  
It could'nt 'nip' with pressure.

But what a lovely beak it is,  
(To pose a question for a quiz),  
How much fruit and flies and lizards,  
Are held there en-route for the gizzards ?  
What a mess !  
Can you guess ?

It surely holds more than—ONECAN !

## ZEBRA

Never cross a Zebra boy !  
He's 'chippy' round the shoulder;  
I think his stripes must hurt, ya' know,  
He's such a touchy so-and-so.

Just feed him hay like any horse,  
Don't pat him on the head, of course,  
Because he doesn't like a fuss,  
It only seems to make him 'wuss.

## RHINOCEROS

There are noses that are long,  
There are noses that are short,  
There are noses that sniff,  
And noses that snort;  
Noses with pimples,  
Noses with warts,  
Noses that always seem out of sorts.

But none of you need to worry or pine,  
For none of you have a nose like mine;  
Nor are you likely to have to mourn,  
A nose betopped with a wicked horn,

Can you wonder I have such a bad disposition,  
Cursed with a horn in such a position ?

**MISS POLAR BEAR**  
**(She's a KILLER)**

Where the wind is full of needles,  
And the snow shrouds down the sky,  
The seals cringe in their ice-holes,  
As the KILLER shambles by.

She is beautiful to look at,  
When you see her in the zoo  
But her heart is full of murder,  
And she's got her eye on you.

Oh, she'll sway and smile demurely,  
As she begs for scraps of food  
She looks cuddlesome and loving,  
And you croon "She looks so good!",  
But if you went down beside her,  
With a yen to be her friend,  
She would CRUSH YOU to her bosom,  
And never mourn your end.

## LEOPARD

A leopard cannot change his spots;  
You're heard it all before.  
They say I can't be trusted,  
And what's more,  
They're absolutely right you know,  
I'm just a no-good so-and-so.

I creep low like a rotten coward,  
Seeking what may be devoured;  
I lie in wait prepared to spring,  
And I will eat most anything,  
That's made of meat.

So please beware  
When I leave my lair;  
You would not think it fair,  
If you happened to be there,  
When I appear,  
**And fancy you for dinner.**

## PARROT

If your temper gets foul,  
And you feel you must howl,  
Something stronger,  
Than **blither** or **flippit** !  
Take a deep breath of air,  
And another to spare,  
Then say—**football, tennis and cricket** !

These words are quite decent,  
They do not offend,  
Either you, or the situation.  
There is no need at all,  
To mouth words that appal,  
For the sake of a 'reputation'.

Now people who meet me,  
Expect me to swear,  
For people taught swearing to parrots,  
But I've learned some sense,  
And I don't give offence,  
I say: **cucumber, custard and carrots** !!



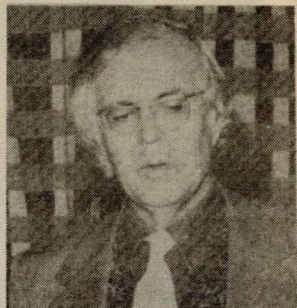
Postscript by Dr. John M. Fletcher, President, The Black Country Society.

The publication of this collection of verse completes another stage of the Black Country Society's programme by which material relating to the area is made readily available to the public. Since its foundation in 1967 the Society has become, with a membership of well over a thousand, one of the country's largest regional organisations. Apart from its work as a publisher, the Society has organised meetings, sponsored cultural activities, assisted in the discussion of planning proposals and generally tried to play an active part in the life of the area. As set out in its constitution, the aims of the Society are very wide: to promote interest in the past, present and future of the Black Country.

To continue the work of the Society and to expand its activities, we need an ever growing membership. We welcome all interested in our area, whether they were born in fact within the Black Country or not. In return for a small annual subscription, members receive four copies of the Society's quarterly magazine, *The Blackcountryman*, are invited to regular meetings, visits and summer excursions and are kept informed of all the Society's varied activities. Their support enables the Society to produce more publications such as this which you have just read. May we request your personal support?

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Details of the Society may be obtained from the Secretary, 49, Victoria Road, Tipton, Staffs.



## The Death of a great poet - Jim William Jones

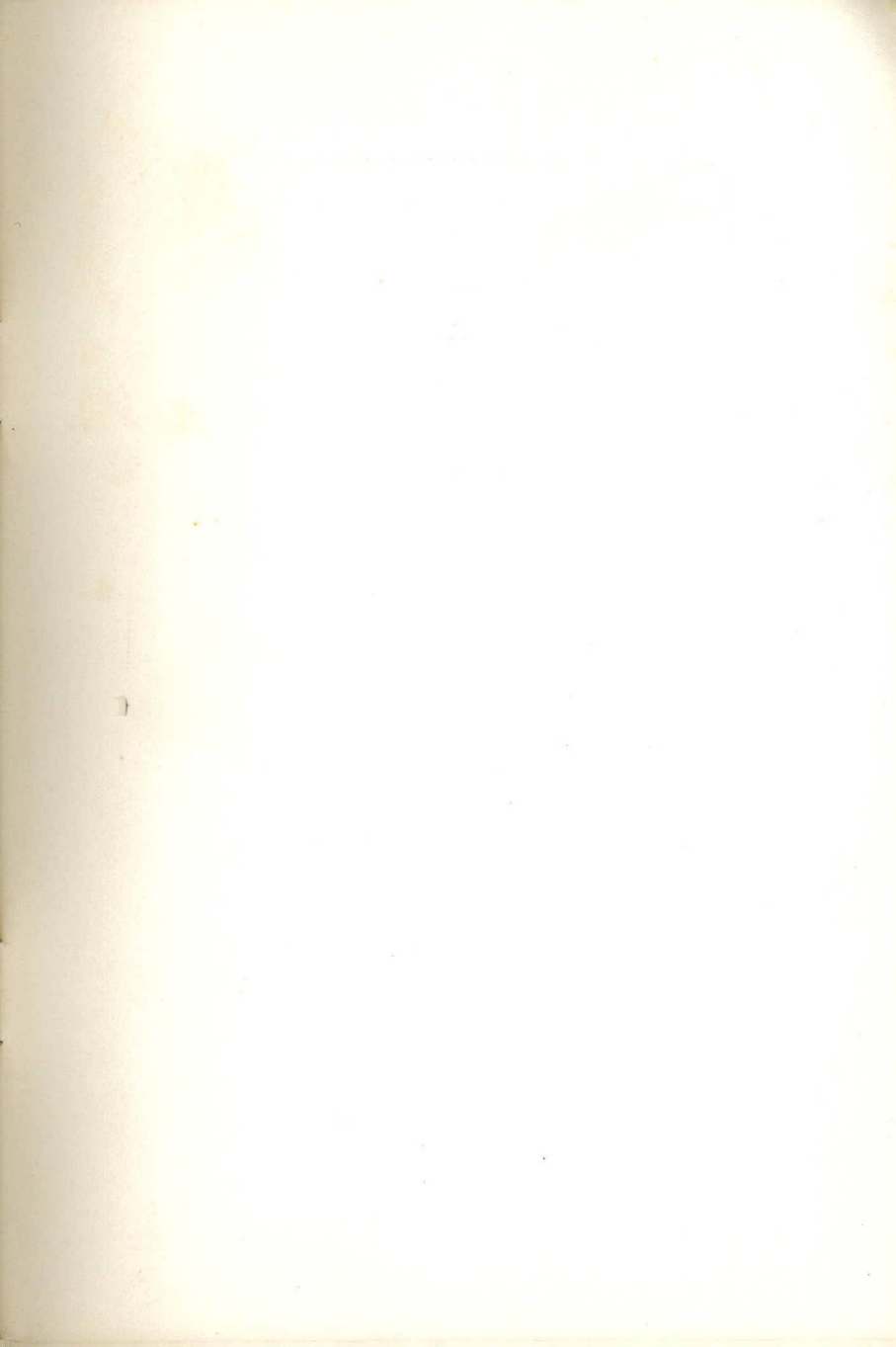
The recent death of Jim William Jones, whose verse has graced our columns for the past 20 years or so, leaves a gaping void in our region's culture which will remain unfilled, for there was only one Jim William Jones.

A true son of the Black Country soil he wrote with great sincerity about his beloved native place and leaves behind a treasury of verse for future generations to study and admire...

'Down the Mar'ole' (on the left) was one of Jim's first poems to be published in the 'Bugle'...R.I.P.

JULY 1993

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## FROM UNDER THE SMOKE

From under the smoke,  
The voice of the fire  
Is speaking in many tongues;  
From the throats of furnaces  
It roars its gutturals,  
In an agony of boiling steel.  
The iris of its eye glows  
At star heat, beaming in sooty corners,  
Where men, like troglodytes,  
Munch their bread and cheese,

Crouched against boulders of iron.  
From under the smoke,  
The red glow spreads,  
Embroidering the solemn clouds;  
And men are marching,  
Their clothing stiff with old sweat;  
Their iron-shod boots,  
Striking sparks from paving stones,  
As though they themselves,  
Were crackling with hidden fire;  
And as they march,  
Their voices crash together.  
They have long since lost the art  
Of quiet speech; vying with the shriek of steel,  
And the tireless clamour of machines,

From under the smoke,  
The song of the people  
Swells, elemental as on old hymn  
Rising with the traffic of souls.  
Their triumph spins around the world,  
Wherever talk of fire and steel  
Inspires the muscle and the will  
Of men, whose alters reek of power.  
The bursting channels of the sun  
Have washed their offspring,  
And the speckled universe  
Has felt the beating of their hearts.

J. WILLIAM JONES