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SAGITTARIUS RHYMING

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by

SAGITTARIUS



JONATHAN CAPE
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NOTE

SINCE the characters mentioned in these pages are obviously imaginary there can surely be no allusion to any living personage

UNDER THE COVENANT 1935-37

THE VOICE THAT BREATHED O'ER EDEN
OR
THE GENIUS OF GENEVA

I spray cool showers on the heated Powers,
In international scenes,
Ease strained relations between Croatians
And hot-on-the-scent Slovenes.
I soothe alarms raised by States-in-arms
And, saved from their own supporters,
I keep the Slavs, already in halves,
From carving themselves in quarters.

I play the shepherd to wolf and leopard,
I fondle the lion's paws,
And show the eagle it's quite illegal
To rend the lamb in its claws.
Through me the weak can vent their pique,
(And never the strong yelled louder)
With joy extreme they can let off steam
So long as they save the powder.

Though bloodstained Japs may quit perhaps,
And the Teutons are simply appalling,
I call them still, like the lost Brazil,
And shall to the end be calling.
I waft my orders to distant borders
At the boom of the first attack,
Their ways to soften, though all too often
My orders are wafted back.

My voice delivers the world from rivers,
And possibly seas, of blood,
I blunt each blow at the *status quo*
And therefore my name is mud.

Each new alliance may shout defiance
And tension each day increase,
Whoever pleases may keep the pieces
So long as I keep the peace.

DEATH CONTROL

‘Five thousand two hundred and eighty-eight persons were killed, and one hundred and seventy-six thousand, two hundred and sixty-seven injured in motor accidents in the United Kingdom from March 11th to November 22nd, 1934.’ — Ministry of Transport.

The Indian takes his man-child, if
Mis-shapen, humped or badly bandy,
And drops it from the nearest cliff
Or in the Ganges if it's handy;
His female offspring far and wide
Are objects of infanticide.

The Dyaks of the Southern Seas
In Borneo's tropic paradises
Their babies neither squash nor squeeze,
A purge of elders there suffices;
Depopulation is assured
By pelting grandpa with the gourd.

While we, to such dark deeds averse,
Who sob to see the sparrow perish,
Who infancy and dotage nurse
And imbeciles and felons cherish,
Wheeled traffic commonly employ
Superfluous thousands to destroy.

For, as beneath the non-skid tyre
And cars of British manufacture,
Infants and ancestors expire
Of simple shock and compound fracture,
Gross overcrowding we prevent
By means that look like accident.

Too many still, through bad technique,
Are left dismembered though surviving,
But what we ultimately seek
Is fatal, but not dangerous, driving,
Till with efficiency and speed
Road casualties are guaranteed.

ULTIMATUM TO PEACE

Dove of the world's desire,
Hymned by the nations' choir,
Wilt thou to Heaven retire,
Deaf to discussion?
Cold to the Powers' whole
Plan for armed peace control?
Canst thou not hear the Pole?
Know'st thou not Russian?

Soarest thou out of reach
Even of English speech?
Can France's peace-time screech
Fail to allure thee?
Is then thy German scant
Balked by the Nazi's cant?
Or does Il Duce's rant
Not reassure thee?

Read'st thou not guarantees
Given in Japanese?
Can such transparent pleas,
Goddess, unnerve thee?
States, dropping warfare crass,
Arms for thy sake amass,
Say it with poison gas,
But to preserve thee!

Over thine empty chair
Damocles' sword in air
Hangs by a single hair,
Ready to fall now.
Come on thy silver wing,
Come with a piece of string,
Tie up the dangling thing
Once and for all now!

Goddess or bird obtuse,
Thee will no pact induce?
Hast for this bristling truce
Small predilection?
Then nothing less than war,
Peace, will thy reign restore.
Slain must thou be before
Thy resurrection!

THE MIDDLE WAY

Some nations ride to ruin 'on a foam-flecked hobby-horse,
But on a see-saw we direct our indirective course;
No blast above or quake beneath can ever overcome
The grip of our ancestral seat on equilibrium.

On centuries of compromise our party system's built,
Which every Coalition compromises to the hilt;
So, leaving social planning to the Tartars and the Turks,
We feel progressive compromise the only thing that works.

Employment for the unemployed our wit cannot contrive —
We compromise officiously to keep them half-alive.
The raging of the nation's thirst we likewise half allay
With statutory compromise — an eight-hour-drinking day.

And what though on the Continent our mediation mild
Still leaves irreconcilables to all unreconciled?
What though, abhorring compromise in the collective cause,
For being neither cold nor hot they spew us from their jaws?

In this semi-precious jewel in the German silver sea,
We hold with semi-carnival a half-way Jubilee,
When Right and Left attuned and all the semitones between
May sound a swelling fanfare to our just-off-golden mean!

LORD LONDONDERRY'S AIR

Believe me, your lordships, I view with alarm
The force of our friends on the Rhine,
And I pledge that no nation's aërial arm
Shall be longer or stronger than mine.
Surprised by a strictly unspecified foe
We should count it no less than disgrace
That our country one jot of protection should owe
To a kind of collective embrace.

Is Britain an eagle contented to mew
While others are arming to fly?
While the neighbouring Powers their puissance renew
And fight for her place in the sky?
Our national safety is merely pretence
If squadrons of bombers we lack,
Assembled alone for protective defence
Or at need for defensive attack.

So now to the armament race we return
Which your lordships need never regret;
Disarmament's case I've not troubled to learn
And shall be at no pains to forget.
Let Socialist pacifists carp as they please,
For the new Armageddon prepare!
Britannia, alannah, the queen of the seas,
Sure I'll make you the queen of the air!

BRIGHTER BROADCASTING

'B.B.C. Talks will in future be handled by Mr. Gladstone Murray, whose diplomacy and wide knowledge of affairs will be of the greatest value to the B.B.C. in avoiding bias, while at the same time assuring listeners of a steady flow of bright and authoritative speakers.' — *News Chronicle*, July 9th.

Speakers haste, and bring with glee
Brightness to the B.B.C.!
Bright religious services
Listeners already bless,
Bright Tattoos and 'musicals',
Bright survivals from the Halls,

All the B.B.C. provides,
Not taking stands nor taking sides.
Bring us talks for more delight,
Authoritative and yet bright!

Brightly, talkers, talk about
Pyorrhoea, sex and drought,
Brightly every subject broach,
Be it Renaissance or roach,
Palaeography or glands,
Sunshine Peeps at other Lands,
White slave traffic, or the moose,
Bottled sunshine from the news,
Vitamins, folk-dancing, drains,
Archaeological remains,
Big-game-hunting, moth-balls, Freud,
The Patagonian unemployed . . .
Once behind the microphone
All the world's a sunshine zone!

THE HARDENED BRAT

I met a little cottage brat,
Her petticoat was red.
She had some contradiction flat
For everything I said.

I took the tombstone next to her,
She gave a dirty grin,
And stirred her little porringer
That had no porridge in.

I told her that I had been sent
To teach the unemployed
The blessings of this Government . . .
She only seemed annoyed.

I said: 'We keep food prices high
And subsidize the land,
Lest it should chance the food supply
Might equal the demand.'

Of levies on imported meat
I then began to speak.
She said: 'We live and dress and eat
On one pound eight per week.'

I asked: 'How many may you be
That gratis we maintain?'
She answered: 'Ma and Pa and me,
Since we lost John and Jane.'

Our recent budgetary gain
I next enlarged upon.
She said: 'You're sitting down on Jane,
I'm sitting down on John.'

I said: 'Our records we affix
To hoardings in the town.'
She said: 'John died at three-and-six
And Jane at half-a-crown.'¹

I praised our charity about
The means test and the cuts.
She said: 'Young John and Jane passed out
Because they'd got no guts.'

¹ The brat was slightly in error. Jane's allowance from the Unemployment Assistance Board would have been 3s.

'And furthermore, till Pa is dead,
He'll never get a job.
But if I die for it,' she said,
'I'll live to fifteen bob!'¹

I left the tombstone next to her,
She gave a dirty grin,
And stirred her little porringer
That had no porridge in.

FEE, FI, FO, FUM!

When Ethiopians roar to unleash the dogs of war,
And sharpen savage knives,
When woolly-haired slave-traders dare call noble Romans raiders
They must answer with their lives.
I was born to put in place this swarthy subject race
Whose conquest fires my veins,
To swot the Abyssinians as old Rome the Carthaginians,
And I am only waiting for the rains.

We Romans need not blench when supported by the French,
By Belgium, Spain and Greece,
While Jugo-Slav and Czecho- both applaud us to the echo
And Britain whimpers 'Peace!'
Imperial states provide war sinews for my side,
Free transit for my planes,
And Suez welcomes shipment of my debited equipment,
And I am only waiting for the rains.

¹ A single woman over 21 years of age receives 15s. a week as Unemployment Insurance benefit.

Our Fascist cause is just but we like our rivals trussed,
So the Powers at my back
Safeguard my expedition by withholding ammunition
From the base and menial black.
Though our treaties are not kept that we drafted while we slept
No blot our honour stains,
For we understand each other and the black is *not* our brother,
And I am only waiting for the rains.

Let the Ethiopie intrigue with the lily-livered League,
The League his grievance air;
By the Ides of this September I'll no longer be a member,
And he will not be there.
No force shall me despoil of Abyssinia's soil!
On conquering campaigns
I am Caesar and Sejanus, Mussolini Africanus!
Advance! I am not waiting for the rains.

HOW THEY BROUGHT THE BAD NEWS FROM GENEVA TO ADDIS ABABA

'We might even see the spectacle of Italy carrying out a punitive expedition into Abyssinia with the apparent approval of the League.' — 'Critic', on the work of the Committee of Five in the *New Statesman and Nation*, Sept. 14th.

They sprang into action a peace to contrive;
The Council, the League, the Committee of Five;
'Good speed!' cried the Parties of pacifist views;
'Speed!' echoed the members with nothing to lose;
The Assembly applauded goodwill to attest,
As they scourged the aggressor and soothed the aggressed.

The League of all Nations in lofty debate
Foretold Abyssinia saved from her fate,
They shuddered and shrank at the rumour of war,
For they loved empire well but the Covenant more,
While the victim proposed they might well intervene
Under Articles 20 or 10 or 16.

While Laval looked to Hoare and Hoare looked to Laval
To sanction joint Sanctions or shut the Canal,
While the Five with acute international tact
Offered protocol, treaty, agreement or pact,
And ministers ended preambles sublime
With 'Let us do nothing while yet there is time!'

Up leaped then at Addis Ababa the sun!
The States from commitments drew back every one.
Each eyeing his nearest next neighbour askance
In the shock and surprise of the Fascist advance,
And the Negus, bamboozled, marched down to receive a
Report from Il Duce on News from Geneva.

UEBERMENSCH

The Nazi Ministry of Enlightenment, etc., announces that the early Saxons were not savages.

'To-day a new faith is awakening, the Muthos of Blood . . . Nordic Blood represents the Mystery which has replaced and overcome the old Sacraments.' — Alfred Rosenberg.

The Saxons in their native state,
As chased around by Charles the Great,
Were not, as chroniclers relate,
Mere hordes unruly.

Those denizens of bog and fen
Though ill-appreciated then
Were arch-Teutonic supermen
Now valued truly.

The Saxon, elemental child
Of Nordic culture undefiled,
Enjoyed between his combats wild
Delirium tremens;
On sacred and bespattered sites
He offered with congenial rites
Blood-cocktails to the appetites
Of gods and demons.

Now reared on Nordic culture's peak
The Saga breed of mould antique,
Bedizened with a yellow streak
Totalitarian,
Hails in the mystic bond of blood
The head of wood, the mind of mud,
Prize product of the Nazi stud,
The new barbarian.

LIKE LEAVES IN VALLOMBROSA

Like leaves in Vallombrosa,
Like virgins in Virginia,
Like monks on Monte Rosa,
Like chiefs in Abyssinia,
Like banditry in China,
Like Turcomen in Khiva,
Like herring in Loch Fyne are
Committees in Geneva.

GUERRA BELLISSIMA!

'War is beautiful when it fills the flowering meadow with the flaming orchids of grapeshot . . . when it makes a symphony of guns and cannon-shots . . . songs of soldiers, odours of putrefaction.' — *Gazzetta del Popolo*.

Guerra bellissima
Fascist-envisaged!
Bone taut and vibrant
Hums with the bullet!
Flesh juvenescent
Leaps to the missile's
Kiss metallurgic!
Wounds of carnation
Gushing warm purple
Effluent viscera,
Red vermicelli,
Glazed, gleaming eyeballs,
Sparking, viridian,
Clay phosphorescent
Rank in corruption,
Burn on Mars' palette
Loved hues of carnage!

Pale putrefaction,
Bone unresponsive,
Flesh gashed in half-tones,
Pallid intestines,
Death-stench insipid,
Mark war's cold carrion
Void of Fascismo!

Iron-tongued loud-speakers
Boost neo-Roman
Art morticultural!

Beat on the ear-drums,
Bark in the city,
Bawl in the mountains,
Blast in the valleys,
Boom in the jungle,
Bray in the desert
Rapture aesthetic,
War's apotheosis,
Fascist boloney!

THE COVENANTERS

'The Dessie bombardment . . . represents the most difficult war operation since the creation of aviation.' — Official Communiqué. Rome, Dec. 9th.

'The reported "peace terms" . . . could hardly be won by Italy in ten years' war.' — *Manchester Guardian*, Dec. 10th.

Viva! Rome's bombing 'planes
Have poured from eagle pinions
Incendiary rains
To frizzle Abyssinians!
This honourable feat
Let not the envious mock;
What if the whole heroic fleet
Had bumped against a rock?

So Caesar's avatar
Lets loose aërial legions
To make an abattoir
Of unprotected regions;
Content, when raids must cease,
His friends Laval and Hoare
Will make a far, far better peace
Than he can make a war.

VALENTINE

'In the past two weeks Customs authorities have seized and confiscated 783 crates of Italian cauliflowers, and 400 cases of Italian lemons.' — *News item.*

'When the oil sanction is ceremonially interred . . . will begin the delicate business of re-cultivating Italian friendship in the true interests of Europe.' — *Observer*, Feb. 9th.

Fair Italy, where lemons grow,
Abjure thy marble pride;
Hearts that with timely rapture glow
Let not the Alps divide.
Our known necessities combine
To make thee now my Valentine.

Thy cauliflowers, as Cupid's pledge,
Each day I'll buy and boil;
No lemon sets my teeth on edge,
Sprung from thy sovereign soil.
Thy vegetables shall be mine
If thou wilt be my Valentine.

I faint for thy reviving touch
(Compare the daily press)
I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour less.
Unmeasured petrol shall be thine
If thou wilt be my Valentine.

LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP

'The time for some step to be taken could not be fixed now . . . the Government were, however, not unaware of the importance of the matter, and preliminary examination of the problem had now been begun.' — Vicount Cranborne in reply to question in House of Commons, Feb. 5th, on Economic Conference, or, more briefly, Government answer to almost anything.

'We, who the course of England keep,
we hold it true whate'er befall,
look long enough, you need not leap
at all.

We weigh the pro against the con,
count consequence on consequence,
perched imperturbably upon
the fence.

Green governments in fragments fly
by breakneck action undermined;
strong words pass by us like the idle
wind.

Encrusted on the ship of state
perpetual barnacles are we,
they longest serve who only wait
and see.'

CLEAR AS MUD

'Mandated territories are not colonies . . . they are only part of the British Empire in what I may call a colloquial sense.' — Neville Chamberlain, House, April 8th.

'Colonies are colonies,' said the Chancellor,
The dark horizon cleared.
'Mandates are mandates,' said the Chancellor,
The Commons rose and cheered.
There's not a palm or a fellah,
Kopje or wallah or crag,
But is for ever the Empire
When once it is under the flag.

*But mandates may fly to the Nazis
As soon as the League allows,
And the Cameroons long for the Nazis
As the spinster longs for a spouse.*

'Colonies are not mandates,' said the Chancellor,
'They shall not be transferred.'
'Mandates are not colonies,' said the Chancellor,
'Whoever said so, erred.'
Let the Nazis possess Tanganyika,
That an era of peace may begin,
Tanganyika pants after the Nazis
As the butterfly pants for the pin.

*Samoa is athirst for the Nazis
As thirsts for Fascismo the Ras,
And Togoland turns to the Nazis
As the suicide turns to the gas.*

ROMEO A LA RUSSE

'*Romeo and Juliet* . . . is said to have been of great assistance to the current campaign on behalf of family life.' — Moscow News Item.

The rationale of these events,
when we collate and analyse
their sociologic elements,
viz.: Montague *v.* Capulet,
show sacredness of kindred ties.
The aged Boyar in his halls
marked down a mate for Juliet,
his family and offspring sole
(though he for that was not to blame,
his lady practised birth-control).
But then in disobedience wild
the aforementioned Juliet came,
with Romeo, her Montague,
to die before she had a child
to join Verona's daily brawls,
continuing the collective feud
where Capulets and Montagues,
in some remote relation's cause,
ran one another through and through.
This cousinhood did not exclude
far-distant uncles and in-laws,
but kin to kindred stuck like glue,
and none, though sentenced, would consent
to waste good feuds in banishment.

How different are conditions here
where comrade-fathers slip the bond,
abandoning relations near,
raise progeny in various spots
and irresponsibly abscond,

Bequeathing the paternal State
full custody of wife and tots.
(An absentee Odessa Dad
lightly begets in Leningrad,
and ere his wife can say My God!
decamps to Nijni Novgorod.)

Such comrades should assimilate
the lesson of this tragedy
with social implications plain
in praise of consanguinity,
and full-time fatherhood regard.
The Soviet State could then maintain
that blackguard Britain's bourgeois Bard
had lived not utterly in vain.

SCHOOL FOR DIPLOMATS

'Herr Hitler set the first example of . . . strident . . . open diplomacy
in his successive Notes; but nothing could be less helpful than to
proceed by public cross-examination.' — *The Times*, May 8th.

Sweet are the uses of conformity
in diplomatic interchange melodious,
ignoring international enormity
to high contracting parties ever odious.

Tirades of dictatorial insanity,
appeals from social scum to social sediment,
fail to discountenance well-bred urbanity
which to no compromise admits impediment.

Not insult and vituperation furious
meet situations delicate and critical,
but catechisms diffidently curious,
Socratic questions, answers Jesuitical

whereby Dictators' pledges of sincerity,
deprived of oratorical vivacity,
are shown for the instruction of posterity,
as self-convicted of their own mendacity.

NAZI! NAZI!

'The Olympic Games must and will . . . carry on propaganda . . . chiefly along the lines of culture. Germany has many suitable organizations for this purpose, including "Strength Through Joy", "Hitler Youth" and "League of German Maidens".' — *National Zeitung*.

'We are facing a conspiracy of the entire sub-human world of a degenerate continent against . . . Germanism.' — *Deutsche Freiheit*.

Nazi culture burning bright
With its nordic-Grecian light,
What sub-human dare defy
Its full totemic majesty?

Greek to species who are not
Aryan to the final clot,
Its ethnic-ethnic-technic dwells
In nordic livestock's sacred cells.

Stainless Aryan youth-bands now
Teach the tourist Herr and Frau,
That all folk-stems may in turn
Kraft durch Schadenfreude learn.

Arts of blood by bloodbaths purged,
In pan-Germanic sunburst merged,
Will their rays as they aspire
Come to set the Thames on fire?

Nazi! Nazi! burning bright
In Europe's deep degenerate night,
Who but Nazis can descry
Thy primitive sublimity?

HOME TRUTHS FROM SPAIN

'If politics get into the hands of extremist fanatics, then the bullet and the bomb take the place of the ballot box. Let us . . . in the British Empire have none of this political barbarism.' — Sir S. Hoare.

When the First Lord reprimands the Spanish storm
With a shudder of ineffable disdain,
As a foreign factions' breach of proper form,
(Phenomenon against the British grain)
He tacitly repudiates a debt
Which even Tory Ministers must owe,
But a man who can't remember
What he promised last September
May well forget three hundred years ago.

Now only Reds are citizens-at-arms,
It's not the really British thing to strike,
But once from England's mills and looms and farms
Rose levies armed with musket and with pike.
The liberties we all may keep or lose
Fanatical extremists brought to pass;
It took quite a revolution
To impose the Constitution,
With some sacrifice of priests and old stained glass.

How else did Downing Street become the State?
How was the Act of Settlement brought off?
Wrongs were not always righted in debate,
At lunch, or during quiet games of golf.
If it weren't for the Cromwells and the Pym,
The Hampdens and the Iretons of the Wars,
If it weren't for the Roundheads,
We'd be governed by the crowned heads,
Instead of by the Baldwins and the Hoares!
The Chamberlains, the Simons,
The Edens and Duff-Coopers,
The Churchills and the Baldwins and the Hoares!

LOCARNO

Talks — 9 a.m. to 3 a.m.

R.S.V.P.

'It is excellent that the Government have succeeded in their efforts to bring both Germany and Italy to a new Locarno Conference.' — *The Times*, Aug. 6th.

Great Britain in the nick again has turned the saving trick again
With diplomatic brilliance famed in Foreign Office feats;
Five peace-pledged Powers are able now to bargain round a table now
Where everybody shows his hand, and everybody cheats.

The Gallic and Britannic Powers, the Roman and Germanic Powers,
Trustees of peace, and bodyguard to Flander's pocket State,
Will swap impressive homilies on regional anomalies
And cry for sacred treaties which are truly up-to-date.

Democracy's vicissitude claims democrats' solicitude,
But claims are out of order while new compromises pend;
The French their Social labours crown by letting Spanish neighbours
down,
Dictators are so coy to catch, so fatal to offend!

The British, quite invincible in all affairs of principle,
Forestalling an occurrence which already has occurred,
Present the torn Peninsula a front superbly insular,
Their rôle as freedom's champion expediently deferred!

With pandering persuasiveness pursuing shrewd evasiveness
Lawbreakers are solicited as guardians of the law;
Fascisti must be mollified and Nazis not disqualified
So that the Men of Destiny may lead the men of straw.

So Belgium with full weight again they'll swear inviolate again
And mutually ratify their rock-ribbed guarantees,
When war's eventuality makes hay of her neutrality,
She'll count on hospitality for future refugees.

Now sternly warning Nemesis from Governmental premises
The European Concert reads its complicated score
With aptitude professional rehearsing their Recessional
The Stresa Three will harmonize with the Locarno Four.

Though heading for futurity in chronic insecurity,
The European system holds precariously intact,
But plighted cunning mending it can only end by ending it . . .
We might survive another War but not another Pact.

THE LARGER LUNACY

'Germany's currency is stable and in no circumstances will be devalued.' — Ministry of Finance.

'Germany has, of course, virtually no gold or gold exchange reserve.' — *Manchester Guardian*, Sept. 29th.

A State defaults on foreign debts,
It goes its happy, bankrupt way,
And astronomic credit gets
Because it does not mean to pay.

The solvent States, to ease the strain,
Devaluate before a fall,
Till none at last on gold remain
But States that have no gold at all.

LEST WE FORGET

'I wonder whether, for the League's sake and our own, we ought not to give formal notice now that we propose to leave it.' — A. P. Herbert, *Standard*, Oct. 5th.

'We submit ourselves whole-heartedly, nay gladly, to the Covenant of the League of Nations.' — Winston Churchill, Sept. 24th.

Ways of our fathers, known of yore,
Who bagged the earth by right divine,
And beacons lesser breeds before
The League arose to our design,
Self-interest plus self-righteousness
No longer seems a great success.

The Island Race, the Nelson touch,
The word-more-binding-than-the-bond
Do not appear to count for much,
The lesser breeds do not respond,
And none our services engage
In tasks of honest brokerage.

The lesser breeds, not in our care,
Who hailed the League with hope renewed
Imply that we their evils bear
With far too noble fortitude,
While at Geneva nothing's heard
But Eden breaking Baldwin's word.

Now, while we still equivocate,
And neither lead nor leave alone,
Should we not quit the doomed debate
Lest the League's cause become our own?
And with our Fascist friends depart
Lest we might make a fairer start?

Lest we reverse the rôle antique
We inauspiciously prolong
Of always pleading with the weak
While always siding with the strong,
Lest we forget, lest we forget,
And make good Europeans yet?

TREMENDOUS TRIFLES

'The Court of Claims has been sitting in the Chamber of the Privy Council since November 25th, to settle hereditary rights and duties at the Coronation, and to rule who is entitled to carry the Great Spurs, the Silver Wand, the Crystal Mace, etc. etc.' — News Item.

The Coronation Court of claims
Holds its uninterrupted sitting,
And ceremonial order frames
Mighty minutiae befitting,
And with solemnity confers
On who shall carry the Great Spurs.

The Crown, which to the naked eye
Shows but a million diamond facets,
Has long been made top-heavy by
Imperial but precarious assets,
Dominions hanging by a hair,
The crux of Ministerial care.

Beneath the Crown the royal skull,
Anointed with symbolic unction
Must be spectacularly null
For its inoperative function,
About the Crown each guards his place,
So who shall bear the Crystal Mace?

Tides wash the Throne's great base and stop
Before that buttress, granite-bedded,
But gusts around the kingly top
Are constitutionally dreaded,
So Kings may from their place step down,
But who shall bear St. Edward's Crown?

Plunged in complexities extreme
Of ritual elaboration
The Court dismisses the supreme
Irrelevance of abdication.
Unbroken holds the Empire bond —
So who shall bear the Silver Wand?

Love conquers all, excepting these,
The Government and Opposition,
All Parties here and overseas,
All clods of high and low condition.
They cry Kings shame, unkinged for love.
But who shall carry the King's glove?

PEKIN PALACE TREASURES

Exhibition of Chinese Art, at the Royal Academy, 1935-6

What is this that goes from us, a wave of light receding
Far from our lives in the shadow of destruction?
A thousand ages' hoarded merchandise,
A thousand curious beauties harvested,
Handiwork of makers who possessing one thing
Followed no new thing; clear language of quiet spirits.

Far on the wind-whipped Atlantic and the sun-loved
Mediterranean, sailing dazzled waters,
The Indian Ocean and the Sea of China,
Who is she that goes from us sailing the starred night,
Sailing the scrolled waves, homeward to the sunrise?

It is she, Kuan Yin, the flower-crowned, the merciful,
In her looks compassion, in her hand the lotus,
It is she who goes from us, Immanence irradiant,
Seen once and gone from our tired eyes for ever.

THE SIREN

Her stomach famished for her figure's sake,
Lithe as a hound and meagre as a rake,
As ageless and as streamlined as a snake,

Slick, peeled and soignée to the finger tips,
With wire-fine brows and calculating lips,
With Cartier solitaire and jewelled clips,

Expressionless, expensive, epicure,
Dispensing with a valuation sure
Laboriously immaculate allure,

Supine, but yet seducible between
Severities of merciless routine,
Live reflex of a fashion magazine,

Bright as a bead and brittle as a bone,
So cosmopolitan but so home-grown —
She is the very scourge of Surbiton.

THE LOST DISCORD

[*To rather sacred music*]

'It has been painfully clear that their (the Labour Party's) differences with irresponsible sections of their own supporters have been far more serious than their differences with the Government.' — Home Secretary at the Carlton Club (*The Times*, Nov. 30th).

Leading the choir in the Commons
As the Old Year ebbs apace,
The Baldwin tenor is deepened
By the boom of the Attlee bass;
It swells the Government Anthem,
'Mid joy-peals from Big Ben,
And the Opposition passes
To the sound of a great Amen!

It soars in a vast crescendo
Which no class strife allows
As the Carlton Club sings seconds
To pickets from Transport House;
Resolving Party discords,
It sounds that Reds may know
That Britain's Labour Party
Is twice as white as snow!

It breathes o'er the Special Areas
Like a promissory psalm,
It fills Rolls-Royce and Vickers
With infinite joy and calm,
It falls like the kiss of the angels
Rude discontent to stem,
And bridges the Past and the Future
With the sound of a great Ahem!

A FINE DISTINCTION

'The Foreign Office . . . have for some time past received letters from anxious mothers whose sons have gone to Spain. . . . In view of this . . . and the fact that volunteering is illegal, the Government . . . have decided to put a stop to it.' — *The Times*, Jan. 12th.

Though sweet and glorious for the Motherland
To die, as patriots in the highest sense,
To die in foreign quarrels must be banned —
A criminal offence.

When Britain summons to a hero's grave
Her sons die gladly to defend her laws,
But now for British mothers to be brave,
There is no cause.

There is no cause which Englishmen should hear,
Thinking to die that liberty may live,
Nor the misguided lives they volunteer
Their own to give.

Not theirs to stand, a few against a flood,
With French, Poles, Slavs and Swiss, by passion led,
With zealots' gore their democratic blood
Must not be shed.

Spontaneously, spectacularly first,
Great Britain shows the world how not to strike,
While all Spain's interveners, uncoerced,
Do as they like.

But, using like a mouse our giant's might,
We stand from history's judgment not exempt;
Above suspicion, and above the fight,
Above suspicion and beneath contempt.

JE MAINTIENDRAI

‘To Herr Hitler’s offer to make Holland inviolable and neutral for all time the Dutch Government have replied that the inviolability of Dutch territory is axiomatic in their national policy and that they are not prepared to make it a matter of discussion with any other country.’
– *The Times*, Feb. 15th.

While our hearts of oak are smitten
With the utmost trepidation
Lest the attitude of Britain
Should estrange the Nazi nation,
While our hand we vainly proffer
With most affable exertion,
Holland spurns the Nazi offer
With peculiar aversion.

She remembers how aforetime
She withstood the might of Spain once,
And the British fleet in wartime
Chivvied on the bounding main once,
And may yet raise sons to keep her
Like a Statthalter new-risen
Or van Tromp, the Channel-sweeper,
With a broom lashed to the mizzen.

And if Nazi souls are straining
With the Third Reich to combine land
All the sacred mouths containing
Of the river of the Rhineland,
Rather fighting, undefeated,
Let the flooded sea secure her,
Than by Nazi treaties cheated
Live by favour of the Führer.

VOX ROMANORUM

'Signor Mussolini was presented with the Sword of Islam . . . at a ceremony near Tripoli . . . in the name of the soldiers and Moslems of Libya. Addressing the crowd Signor Mussolini emphasized his words by waving his sword in the air.' — *The Times*, March 19th, 1937.

Say, listen, Libya!
This is Babe Benito First, Second, Fifth and Tenth!
Vittorio Emanuele the Third,
He's the band on my cigar.
Wotthell, I made him Emp'ror ain't I?
He ain't got no kick coming.
Sure Abyssinia's a bunch of lousy niggers,
But the goddam British Empire ain't nothin' else.
Maybe I take it, one day.
I'm Babe Benito!

Get this, Geneva!
I guess I told you where you get off.
I guess I'm boss all right.
Maybe you remember Abyssinia. . . .
Laff that off, you bastards!
Get this, you non-intervention sissies,
I'm givin' the Reds the bum's rush outta Spain.
I bet Madrid's a second Addis Ababa
Before you can say Caesar!

I'm Babe Benito.
I ain't no Hitler, handin' out five-cent pledges,
To one-horse States, crazy to make the headlines,
Gassing to yes-men in a lousy Opera House.
I tell the world from a tractor, a cannon, a war-horse;
They take it an' like it.
Hell, I got England scared silly, ain't I?

I'll say I got the drop on Vienna!
I'll say the Lion of Judah's a laff all right!
I'll say I got the Vatican where I want it!
Jeese, an' now I'm Defender of Islam.

Listen, Libya!
I'm Defender of Islam all right.
I don't need no goddam son of a mullah to gimme the o.k.
Maybe you seen me give the Rases the works!
An' if there's any funny business you know what's coming
to you.
I'm Babe Benito.'

THE DRESS REHEARSAL

The Spaniard's blood is fiery, the Spaniard's head is hot,
The Spaniards' quarrels are their own, the Spanish War is not;
As amateurs they flew to arms, not even knowing how,
And, lacking expert aid, the scrap would be all over now.

But war-trained Powers took the field with small hope of reward,
To save the modern world the shame of fighting with the sword,
They lavished field-equipment and the necessary men,
For just a little looting and some plunder now and then.

They shelled, and they bombarded, and they mechanized the ranks
With armoured-cars, machine-guns, and artillery and tanks,
They filled the sky with bombers and they strewed the sea with mines
And mowed militia down with guns of delicate designs.

So when all volunteers were by non-intervention banned,
They had to send out armies and assume the high command,
And the hundred-thousand Fascists who now animate the scene
Are naturally hostile when the Spaniards intervene.

While sharing full expenses in the observation posts
To make all neutral ships 'move on' around the Spanish coasts,
Their expeditionary force involves a double cost,
But they know the opportunity too precious to be lost.

The seven-and-twenty nations who agree to stand apart
From this striking demonstration of the military art,
Combine to make these critical manœuvres a success,
Whatever other sentiments their citizens profess.

In Spain the newest theories of the Staffs can be applied,
In Spain they test inventions, never previously tried,
For Spain's the dress-rehearsal, with effects not seen before,
For the final presentation on a world-wide scene of war.

HEIL GÖTTINGEN!

[Acknowledgments to George Canning. The poem, on which this is modelled, *The University of Göttingen*, was published more than a century ago.]

'Durham, of which Lord Londonderry is Chancellor . . . is . . . the only British University to accept the invitation . . . to the Göttingen bicentenary celebrations in June.' — *News Chronicle*, April 28th.

Now the Third Reich has purged anew
these halls our foes were plotting in,
the learned world is bidden to
our *Kulturfestspiel* at the U-
-niversity of Göttingen.

While democrat and ape-like Jew
our penal camps are rotting in,
the Chairs of Totem and Tabu
take place of honour at the U-
-niversity of Göttingen.

Our plant of Nordic culture true
this nursery we are potting in,
unique for its ensanguined hue,
which smells to heaven at the U-
-niversity of Göttingen.

Intoxicating Brocken-brew
this cauldron we are hotting in,
to rise to Nazi brains like glue
and stick our dogma to the U-
-niversity of Göttingen.

Ach! Groves of learning, fair to view,
with no non-Aryan squatting in,
where racial fetish reigns in lieu
of arts and science at the U-
-niversity of Göttingen-
-niversity of Göttingen!

PAJAROS NEGROS¹

‘A hideous week in Spain has involved the complete destruction of Guernica . . . little doubt remains that it was the exclusive work of German aeroplanes and bombers.’ — *Observer*, May 2nd.

Black birds over Guernica roaring and wheeling,
fighters and bombers hawking and swooping in chase
over the tottering churches, the farmsteads, the reeling
houses and market-place,

¹ Pajaros negros (black birds), the current Spanish phrase for the great Junker bombers.—*The Times*, April 30th.

filling the eyes with the image of terror, and filling
the ears with the screams of the buried under the walls,
droning and drumming, soaring and zooming, rending and killing,
glutted as darkness falls.

Leaving the place of their feasting blackened and burning,
leaving the ruins for omen, the dead for a sign,
blackbirds voided of death to their eyries returning
honoured over the Rhine.

Who shall avenge Guernica? None will avenge her,
It is not the blood of our children that cries from the ground.
Death has no summons to call from the sky the revenger,
the murdered make so sound.

Over our shifts and surrenders, connivance unending,
hover the smoke and the reek of that smouldering pyre,
We will remember Guernica when black birds descending
Our cities set on fire.

BRITANNIA'S PLAINT

[*To the tune of 'Greensleeves'*]

'... the enlightened classes of this country are losing . . . the affection they had for Great Britain'. — Extract from General Franco's Note.—
The Times.

Franco was my dearest dear,
Protected by my guarantee,
No enemy I suffered near
And yet he would not love me.

To starve Bilbao by blockade
I warned my foodships off the sea,
My fleet I summoned to his aid,
And this I did right willingly.

My Rio Tinto copper mine,
He gave it all to Germany;
My rights and profits I resign,
And yet he does not love me.

The Fascist Powers lend help for gain,
They seize both land and goods for fee;
My love has no material stain,
My services are rendered free.

I plead his cause, I speak him fair,
Through outrage and atrocity,
He blows my ships into the air,
I cheer him on to victory.

He may do anything he will,
With nothing I shall disagree
In all his works I find no ill
And yet he will not love me.

WOOSTER OF WHITEHALL

[*With apologies to P. G. Wodehouse*]

Well chappies, here we are, smoothing out the old fracas,
We've got control and all that sort of rot.
I've explored the whole posish, but I won't cry stinking fish,
Or the thing would absolutely go to pot.

I exude the good old tact *re* the breaches of the pact,
And I've beetled in to pour the spot of oil,
For the world feels safe and sound if we Woosters rally round
While the dear old League is pro tem. off the boil.

I maintain the cool perspective on the jolly old objective,
Prolonged pourparlers are my cup of tea;
Though I mop the streaming brow when the colleagues start a row,
For we only meet to beat about the b.

Old Franco understands he may use whatever lands
So long as no one gives away the show;
But I get the bally pip and the thing eludes the grip
When some blisters go and publish all they know.

When I see the heavy fist I am swift to grasp the gist
(We Woosters aren't the copper on the beat).
If at night we hurl the warning, we withdraw it in the morning
And jolly well remove the British Fleet.

We'll remain the old school friend till the bust up's at an end,
And Valencia's mangled fragments are inhaled;
Then you'll all feel pretty braced that no step was stepped in haste,
And a cordial cameraderie prevailed.

We perceive the snag that lurks in the present painful circs',
As we referee the doings from afar;
And the strength for holding back while we take the dirty crack,
Is the thing that makes us Woosters what we are.

UNDER THE UMBRELLA 1937-40

NO FLOWERS

League of Nations Assembly. May, 1937

'Say not the struggle naught availeth!'
We still discuss the status quo.
Geneva's radiant sunrise paleth,
There lingers yet the afterglow.

And none the less the world advances
Piecemeal towards our peaceful goal
Though we perceive when circumstances
Have passed beyond the League's control.

Though there be reason for dejection
In Abyssinia, Danzig, Spain,
Such instances of imperfection
Are lessons never learned in vain.

Freed from the idealist's confusion
We hold the realistic view,
And banning sanctions and exclusion,
A broader Covenant renew.

No more impatient of fruition,
Each painful setback we survive,
More constant in decomposition
Than when we thought we were alive.

HEAR! HEAR!

‘At the National Government Demonstration, July 9th, Mr. Chamberlain referred to his critics as “Dismal Jimmies” who wish “to interfere with your innocent pleasure in the sunshine, because of their assertion that it is going to rain to-morrow. . . . I have never seen such an imposing demonstration of support for a National Government . . . that association which after rescuing the country from a great peril has worked . . . for the general interest without distinction of party or class”.’

How fortunate is England when the Government is National,
Above the party dog-fight, now outmoded and irrational!
How blessed when the Government is National Conservative
With one per cent of Lib. and Lab. for permanent preservative!

We milk an ever-flowing fisc, to Socialists refractory,
We providently subsidize the foundry, farm and factory,
We shelter private enterprise and foster planned economy,
We rout the Dismal Jimmies with the good old Tory *bonhomie*.

To every foreign Power a friend, we are not therefore dilatory
In preparations naval, aeronautical and military;
We safeguard our investments to posterity’s posterity
And pile up tariffs to assure perpetual prosperity!

Then dedicate the country to this pregnant proposition
Most happy is the Government without an Opposition!

COMPLETE AMUSEMENT GUIDE

SUNDAY.

Great Britain sews up Spain's *cordon sanitaire*,
French banks break the back of the *Front Populaire*,
The Rome-Berlin Axis puts states in a spin,
And the Little Entente is uneasy within.

MONDAY.

Schacht showers on Danubia the boon of Reich trade,
Von Neurath is voted *de trop* in Belgrade,
The *Queen Mary* leaves dry-dock as Queen of the Sea,
And U.S.A. strikers are making whoopee.

TUESDAY.

The Little Entente shares identical views,
Spain's naval patrols are transferred to canoes,
Japan with acclaim joins the peacemaker's ring,
And Cathleen na Hooligan blows up a King.

WEDNESDAY.

Great Britain's prosperity booms at the peak,
The Chancellor cancels the tax of the week,
Half the Little Entente gives the Nazi salute,
And citizen Stalin is off on a shoot.

THURSDAY.

The Windsors are offered the Austrian crown,
Geneva breaks up, and world trade-talks break down,
The Duce earns Hitler's *ur-nordische* badge,
And Congress in India gives the razz to the Raj.

FRIDAY.

The charm of Ciano disarms Budapest,
Newspapers all over the world are suppressed,
The Balkans dissolve and announce a fresh start,
And the Little Entente keeps on falling apart.

SATURDAY.

Esthonia plans to become self-contained,
Reich sovereignty over all *Wurst* is regained,
The Solomon Islands make ready for war —
And the Little Entente is the same as before.

THE GUNS

‘Has the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs any further information regarding the Spanish guns emplaced opposite Gibraltar? Do His Majesty’s Government know the country of origin of these guns?’ — Question in the House, July 25th.

‘The picture which Mr. Lloyd George has painted of the situation in the neighbourhood of Gibraltar was not accurate. . . . No useful purpose was served by creating an atmosphere of suspicion about conditions that did not exist.’ — Mr. Eden in House, July 30th (*The Times*).

Hark to the voice of England
calming the restless House,
where Tories strain at their moorings
and Socialists cavil and grouse!
Now will the Government falter?
A word through the Commons runs . . .
‘What of the guns round Gibraltar?
England, what of the guns?’

Eden for England stands steady,
clear-toned and cool in his place;
‘You whisper of batteries ready,
you hint of an enemy base,
you whine of a Fascist danger,
you fear what the Reich intends . . .
these are not the guns of a stranger,
these guns are the guns of friends!’

'Wide are the seas, and who is
the ward of the western gates?
All are welcome in Suez!
All are free of the Straits!
He speaks, and a nameless suspicion
wavers away like smoke,
for are Britons not friends by tradition
with Latin and Teuton folk?

Friends of the Duce and Führer,
are not our cultures twin?
Wagner, and Schiller, and Dürer,
Dante and Raphael our kin?
No interests our kinship can threaten,
no mischief our friendship dispel.
'What of the guns?' questions Britain,
and Britain replies, 'All is well!'

CULTURAL ATTACHÉS
OR
INTELLIGENT ANTICIPATION

'There is a proposal that "cultural attachés" should be appointed to the more important embassies . . . (it is clearly the desire of the [Nazi] Party leaders that they should be accorded full diplomatic privileges); and it is proposed that London should have the honour of being the first country to receive these additional members of the *corps diplomatique*.' — *The Times*, Aug. 31st.

If you wake at midnight and hear a stifled scream,
It is probably a German getting wise to the *régime*;
Don't go calling the police or make excited sounds,
It's the cultural attachés on their diplomatic rounds.

Cultural attachés,
Snooping after dark,
Sniffing round St. James's,
Snuffing round the Park,
Prying at the key-hole,
Sidling out and in,
All for making London a suburb of Berlin.

Nazi culture shock-troops, trained in manly games,
Spouting Nazi values, touting Nazi claims,
Keeping close surveillance with superior technique
While sheltered in the bosom of the *corps diplomatique*.

Twenty thousand Germans somewhat out of hand,
Nazi ideology will shortly understand,
While Anglo-Nazi fellowships facilities arrange
For ethico-political-aesthetical exchange.

Renegades and refugees taken by surprise,
England as a breeding ground for little Nazi spies,
If these cultural activities raise question or demur
A diplomatic cleavage will infallibly occur.

Ferrets of the Third Reich,
Spreading mystic urge,
Here and there a pogrom,
Now and then a purge;
If you see a body
Don't go butting in,
Just get used to London as a suburb of Berlin.

J'ACCUSE!

'Albania did not answer the invitation to the Nyon Conference.'—
News item.

Mediterranean pirates run,
prowling the seas at large.
Which is the Power the rest will shun?
What is the flag of the pirate? None!
Russia denounces the guilty one,
Italy spurns the charge!

Mediterranean councils meet,
States for defence ally;
nine sea-Powers police the beat.
Who held back with his dreadnought fleet?
Who was not in the council seat?
Who did not deign to reply?

Armed patrols round the ocean race;
where is the pirate nest?
Where is the sea-wolves' hiding-place?
Where the submarine secret base?
Who will fly from the cruiser's chase?
Nobody seems to have guessed.

Name and face of the skulking foe
hide in the densest fog;
but everyone knows, who is in the know,
everyone would, if they dared, say so,
everything everywhere goes to show
everything points to Zog!

UNFOUNDED RUMOURS

‘There have been rumours recently that some action by the Assembly of the League of Nations is contemplated with a view to “regularising” the position of Italy in Abyssinia . . . we may be confident that our Government will not be guilty of such a betrayal of international law and justice.’ — Letter from Dr. Gilbert Murray and Lord Cecil. *The Times*, Aug. 24th.

We will banish groundless rumours from men’s hearing,
Which refutations only seem to spread,
We will resurrect the faith, fast disappearing,
That Britain always means what she has said,
We will steadily and mightily revive
The great Hoare pledge of 1935.
We will not yield to bluster or defiance,
Or give Imperial Fascist claims support,
To purchase by perfidious compliance
Mediterranean peace, however short.

Above intrigues and sophistries Genevan,
The bargaining, the bleating and the blah,
When all the birds come home to roost at even
And hoot the knell of Abyssinia,
Unshaken on our unilateral course
We will condemn the fruits of lawless force.
Recovering her voice among the nations,
Great Britain, trumpet-tongued, will leave no doubt
That all these tales are baseless fabrications. . . .

It’s curious how such rumours get about.

COLLOQUE IMAGINAIRE

[*After Verlaine*]

'The Duce . . . set the pace . . . at such a speed that Herr Hitler had difficulty in keeping up with him.'

'Signor Mussolini arrived in his special train (at Essen) soon after 8 a.m. He was received on the platform by Herr Hitler, whose special train had arrived a quarter of an hour earlier.' — News items, Sept. 27th.

The two dictators, seated cheek by jowl
Converse with smiles more horrid than their scowl.

—You're fatter, Führer, since I saw you last.
—Duce, it was not planned to run so fast.

—You ought to exercise, or ride at least.
—*Nein, nein!* The horse is not a Nordic beast.

—Here is some gargle from my own supplies,
I heard your throat conked out. — Bolshevik lies!

You like my blondes, for racial rapture ripe?
—As cradle-fillers, good; but not my type.

—What will you dine on? Make yourself at home.
—Why, Wienerschnitzel, as it's cooked in Rome!

Is this herd docile, Führer, which I view?
—*Ja!* By my order they are cheering *you*.

The Axis, you have brought it, if you please?
—*Si.* Packed inside my bullet-proof valise.

—The wave of public joy is now rehearsed.
See you at Krupps. *But let me get there first!*

ACROSS THE PYRENEES

'Downing St. is well aware that Franco has three fully-equipped Italian divisions of 80,000 men.' — Daily Papers, Oct. 19th.

O Eden, go and call the volunteers,
And call the volunteers
Across the Pyrences,
Till lawless intervention disappears
On land as on the seas.

The chairman's sub-committee perseveres,
Invasion perseveres,
The Plymouth Brethren pray;
The sub-committee's sub-committee clears
Last obstacles away.

And every State to every plan adheres,
In principle adheres
To formulas worn thin,
While no impetuous action interferes
With Franco's scheduled win.

But when the picked Italian troops with cheers
Advance, with martial cheers,
With battle-airs and drums,
When, somehow leaking through Spain's shut frontiers,
The Fascist army comes,

With clang of armoured columns in men's ears,
(In all but Eden's ears)
It seems, in view of these,
Superfluous to call the volunteers
Across the Pyrenees.

THE NEW LEAGUE

Rome's tripartite agreement shows
a white-hot coalescence;
its whole dynamic message glows
with Fascist incandescence.
Far, far beyond Geneva's reach,
pedantically legal,
this soaring and exultant screech
proclaims the Fascist eagle.

They hail the coming Fascist age
From Reich and Roman rostrum,
as now for Colonies they rage,
and now for Mare Nostrum!
And when they've purged from every land
Bolshevik desperadoes
the earth will be the Duce's (and
the Reich's and the Mikado's).

Above Geneva's stark remains
the Fascists turn the tables
and hurl totalitarian Cains
on democratic Abels,
while peace-pledged nations view with dread
their logical successor,
the new League of the anti-red
against the non-aggressor.

THE ABOMINABLE HOODED MEN

'The French police have discovered clear evidence of a vast Fascist plot against the Republic. But public attention is diverted to one comparatively trivial and almost comic aspect of this plot — the activities of the Cagoularde . . . the Hooded Men.'

They've found the secret hide-out of the Hooded Men, they say,
An' plots to overthrow the State, all ready fer The Day,
An' documents, an' radio, an' forts built underground,
With gas-bombs, an' explosives, an' machine-guns piled around,
An' they'll bust into the Chamber by the sewers an' the drains,
An' grab the Chautemps Government an' hang 'em up in chains,
An' the Crime Squad told the papers, so the rumour's got 'bout
That the Hooded Men'll git yer, ef yer don't watch out.

They're mighty hard to capture fer they haven't any heads,
They ain't the Right er Centre er the Radicals er Reds,
You tell 'em by a kind of hat 'most anyone can wear,
One minute They's behind you, an' the next They's nuthin' There,
It jist can't be the Croix de Feu that hides behind the mask,
'Cause when la Rocque wants anything, he's only got to ask,
An' the Duke of Guise don't need 'em, 'cause he'll crown himself with-
out,
But the Hooded Men'll git yer, ef yer don't watch out.

They heerd of Great Big Black Things hid in Coty's old Chateau,
But they only found a death-ray an' some footprints in the snow,
An' they tapped for secret tunnels underneath the concrete wall,
An' they photographed the footprints, but found nuthin' else at all,
But they guess when no one's lookin' most all cellars are a den
Of abominable Cagoularde (that's French fer Hooded Men)
An' they better run an' grab 'em, fer there ain't the leastest doubt
The Hooded Men'll git yer, ef yer don't watch out.

PIRATE INTO PORPOISE

[*A Ballad of the Fleet*]

'An official Admiralty statement says: It has been established that an attack on H.M.S. *Basilisk* was not made. An Admiralty official, commenting, said: We cannot tell what it was that appeared to be a torpedo. It might have been a porpoise, but we cannot really say.' — *News Chronicle*, Oct. 9th.

It was H.M.S. *Basilisk* patrolled the Spanish sea,
With the *Bluebottle* to windward and the *Bunfight* on her lee,
It was two bells in the forenoon, and no pirates to be seen,
When her submarine-detector twigged a skulking submarine.

They dusted off a depth-charge and allowed it time to drop,
They waited till an oily patch had risen to the top,
Then they signalled that the submarine had sunk with every soul,
And steamed off to join the *Bunfight* on the piracy patrol.

But Admiralty officials, being honourably bound
By a gentleman's agreement that no pirates should be found,
After full investigation when all evidence was weighed,
Announced a submarine attack was never really made.

The unconfirmed impression of the captain and the crew
Was ruled right out of hearing, as it plainly would not do,
But a chatty spokesman added to their terse communiqué,
'It might have been a porpoise, but we cannot really say.'

The oily patch was stated, after weeks of expert toil,
Consistent with a porpoise which had taken castor oil,
So the *Basilisk's* Commander, though he hadn't thought of that,
Said it might have been a porpoise that mistook her for a sprat.

THE OLD CARTHUSIAN

'A British lawyer and an old Carthusian . . . seized a paper flag from a Japanese spectator and broke the stick across his knee.' — Daily papers, Dec. 3rd.

Three things fell on the Shanghai Road
As the Japanese troops marched through;
A body, hurled from a fearful height,
A bomb that sputtered and burst outright,
And a flag that in scorn of the conqueror's might
A Briton had snapped in two.

Japan's victorious troops tramped by,
To show Shanghai was won,
With China's doom in their measured tread,
Which even the foreigners heard with dread,
But an Old Carthusian there saw red
At the flag of the Rising Sun.

The Nine-Power-Conference kowtow'd,
The western world lost face,
And England feared to affront Japan
With half-way sanctions or token ban;
But somewhere an Old Carthusian
Gave proof of his Island Race.

Was he mown down on the Shanghai Road
As the Japanese troops let fly?
A thousand weapons above him waved,
A maddened multitude round him raved,
But he turned and ran and was jugged and saved,
Complete with the Old School Tie.

★ ★ ★

Three things fell on the Shanghai Road,
Where spellbound thousands stood,
And round the world the news was flashed;
A bomb exploded, a suicide crashed
And a Japanese flag to the earth was dashed —
Old Charterhouse Boy Makes Good!

NEVILLE THE POOH
OR
LET'S BE FWENDS

'Mr. Chamberlain said he had sent Signor Mussolini a personal letter. In the letter he expressed regret that relations between Great Britain and Italy were not those of mutual confidence and affection which had formerly subsisted.' — Prime Minister in House of Commons (*The Times*, Nov. 4th).

Anglo-Italian accord has been strained,
Mutual confidence must be regained,
Everyone says that the chance is remote —
Hush! Mr. Chamberlain's writing a note.

Chamberlain trusts in the personal touch;
Threats and embargoes are always too much;
Give token vouchers of love and esteem,
And misunderstandings will fade like a dream.

Dear Mussolini, be friends as of old,
Our error is ended, the League has been sold;
Sanctions were just a compulsory hoax,
And Non-Intervention is one of our jokes.

Still Fascist tactics alarm and perplex,
Still Mussolini seduces the Sheiks,
Still Tory circles are bothered and hot,
Something is brewing but God knows what!

Can dear Mussolini still be in a huff?
Is a personal letter not really enough?
Let him say Boo! to the Duce who dares —
Hush! Mr. Chamberlain's saying his prayers!

3 a . m .

This is the hour of night and day
that has no compensating ray,
when, wakeful, you retrace a route
bordered both sides with dead sea fruit,
when life's past gaffes before you rise,
and love, the worm that never dies,
when, keeping dismal rendezvous,
your life gets up and looks at you.

This is the hour when pulses wane,
when vital currents backward drain,
a rift in time, a wall worn thin
through which the outside oozes in;
it is the window whence you see
the purlieus of eternity,
the draughty doorway that lets through
your death to stand and look at you.

RECESSIONAL

No, there isn't a slump,
Just a healthy recession.
Though shares fall with a bump,
No, there isn't a slump;
It's not trade but the hump
That creates a depression.
No, there isn't a slump,
Just a healthy recession.

ROOT POLLUTION

'The decision to introduce foreign farm labour into Germany is due to the acute shortage of agricultural workers. Every precaution will be taken to safeguard against race pollution. The Italian and Polish workers will be housed in barracks.' — *Daily Telegraph*.

O well may the Nazis recoil
from profaning the Reich blood and soil,
by a hired invasion
(Non-Nordic Caucasian)
for their holy agrarian toil.

Can the Bureau of Tribal Control
save the Aryan bloodstock and soul
from the energy phallic
of tubers Italic
or swedes impregnated with Pole?

Can they immunize Germany's breed
from the taint of an alien seed,
when, though sex-segregation
prevents consummation
the bloodstream is sapped through the feed?

How vain, with eugenic foresight,
to lock the loose blondes in at night
when strangers unhallow
the ploughland and fallow
with a foreign fertility rite!

For despite all precautions that hedge
the racial purity pledge
it can't be disputed
a strain is polluted
by the virus imbibed in the veg.

QUID PRO NIL

More valiant and high-stepping Powers
Make war and glory their concern;
Shopkeeping nations such as ours
Invest against a safe return,
But business caution we suspend
To buy the Duce for a friend.

The price of his esteemed goodwill
(Without security) includes
The cost of Abyssinia's bill,
A loan advanced on stolen goods.
Our shopsoiled honour goes as well
To purchase — what he has to sell.

Resolved to stick at no expense
To set aggression on its feet
We bribe with simple confidence
This bankrupt and unquestioned cheat
Who, once assisted to the top,
Will scheme to make us shut up shop.

Well-met above the corpse of Spain,
Extended credits we arrange,
The Duce basks in golden rain,
We keep Geneva — and the change.
The price we stoop to pay is high,
But what in God's name do we buy?

TWO-WAY STRETCH

'His Majesty's Government will resist every act of unprovoked aggression.' — Sir S. Hoare, 1935.

'His Majesty's Government do not regard their membership of the League as preventing or hindering friendly relations with non-members.' — Anthony Eden, 1938.

Some face the League with more *esprit*,
Some preach at greater length,
But none wholeheartedly as we
To all the Covenant agree,
Which makes the word of Britain
A tower of moral strength.

As when Hoare spoke (Geneva's pride)
So now when Eden speaks,
The audience in a loud aside
Express themselves much gratified —
Especially Rumanians,
Assyrians and Greeks.

Our steadfast faith (from acts divorced
In case of flagrant lapse)
By all non-members is endorsed
With spontaneity unforced —
Especially the Fascists,
The Nazis and the Japs.

To know our Government disdains
The ideologic breeze,
The last minorities sustains
Who fight for liberty's remains —
And most the Abyssians,
The Spaniards and Chinese.

HYMN FOR SWASTIKA SUNDAY

There is a land beyond the Rhine
Where happy Nazis dwell,
And none but Christians, Jews and priests
Are really getting hell.

The Saviour from Mount Sinai gives
The Law from year to year,
Before whose wrath Reich enemies
Completely disappear.

Till, purified by purge on purge,
The Führer's radiance spreads
On none but those who've lost their wits
And those who've lost their heads.

His loving summons, hear O hear,
Uplift the neighbour States
As gladsome multitudes are drawn
Within the pearly gates!

So far afield Reich heralds fly,
So loud Reich peace planes roar,
That many a child who heard in Spain
Will wake and play no more.

Glad strains of praise fill every land
Where Nazis call the tune,
Would we were of that happy band!
(We will be very soon.) Amen.

THE LION ROARS

Endymion, bombed and sunk, Jan. 31st.
Alcira, bombed and sunk, Feb. 4th.

General Franco's a sahib we know,
He gave us the Calpe Hunt
Where our Army johnnies can ride to hounds
In sight of the Spanish battlegrounds.
But when Franco's bombers get out of bounds
Our language is pretty blunt.

General Franco safeguards our trade,
He's the friend to British firms.
Back in Bilbao our fleet stood by,
But if his pirates again let fly
The British Government will reply
In no uncertain terms.

He had rotten bad luck at Teruel,
(Though he's got the scrap in hand)
But our Government's not afraid to state,
The sinking of British ships and freight
Is something we will not tolerate
And are not prepared to stand.

The Nyon Patrol is wide awake
Round Spain's blockaded shore,
And if merchant vessels are seen attacked
It will rank as a most unfriendly act,
And General Franco will know in fact
Just what he is asking for.

General Franco's a sahib right through
And the great white hope of Spain;
But we warn him here, if he won't play ball,
Our Tokyo Note he had best recall,
And he'd better not do it again, that's all,
He'd better not do it again.

HUMANITARIAN

As Franco's high explosives rain
From Barcelona's falling skies,
The Premier, recklessly humane,
Expostulates with his allies.

The world his pious horror hears,
But for that overflowing grave
It falls unheard on murdered ears
And mocks the dead he feared to save.

THE LISTENERS ADJOURNED

[*With acknowledgments to Walter de la Mare*]

'I have moved the Adjournment of the House to call attention to . . . the lack of any ministerial policy to counter a grave menace to British interests arising out of the armed intervention in Spain by certain foreign Powers.' — Mr. Attlee, House of Commons, March 16th, 1938.

'Is there anybody there?' said Mr. Attlee,
Pointing to the Treasury Bench;
And the Whips champ'd the twilight of the Chamber
Which the silence seem'd to drench:
And a moth flew up out of the baldaquin
Above the Speaker's head.
And he smote upon the Table for a second time;
'Is there anybody there?' he said.
But nobody answered Mr. Attlee,
And he felt the stillness grow,
As the Government declined to be committed
Whether they were there or no.
And a host of thronging listeners squeaked and shuffled
But no Front Bencher stirred
As the last unanswered question of the session
Quavered into the air unheard.
'Well, I gave notice of the question' said Mr. Attlee,
And suddenly he turned,
And the faintly shaken silence heaved behind him
As the listeners adjourned.

PLEBISCITIS

Now Austria swarms to the polls
To acclaim her enforced abolition
The plebiscite wave as it rolls
Wipes out every Treaty partition.
Prague sinks itself into the Reich
By ballot of Slovak and Czecho;
For *Añschluss* exchanging *Ausgleich*
Hungarians *heil* to the echo.

With one irresistible urge
Rumanians offer Rumania,
The Letts all elect to submerge
That the Poles may engorge Lithuania,
Rome boasts a one hundred per cent
Referendum of live Abyssinians,
China rubs itself out with intent
To expand the Mikado's dominions.

And England, whose battles were won
Of old on the *Sportplatz* Etonian,
Who for freedom fights gallantly on,
Holding out to the last Catalonian,
Now votes plebiscites for the enslaved,
To avoid international friction,
That countries too weak to be saved
May consent to their own crucifixion.

ELEGY

[*After Oliver Goldsmith*]

'Great Britain makes a difficult sacrifice of principle by promising to bring the question of the recognition of the sovereignty of Ethiopia before the League of Nations.' — *The Times*, April 18th.

Good people all of every kind,
Unto my song give ear,
Of how the nations late combined
To make aggressors fear,

Of eight-and-fifty sheep-dogs, bound
No more to bark or bite,
And tainted wethers to impound
With full collective might.

A wolf in sheepskin was disclosed,
A lurking beast of prey.
The League his brigandage opposed,
A mouton enragé —

And more in sorrow than in ire
Put on the sanctions screw
To make the peacebreaker retire,
As they were sworn to do.

The killer ravaged, undismayed
By their coercive thrust,
The justice of his force outweighed
The forces of the just.

Their logic was confounded quite
As fact with theory vied,
The wolf recovered from the bite;
The League it was that died.

THE GAME

Contestants for historic fame
Amid the European stress,
Benes and Hitler play their game
Of chess.

World experts keep the moves in view,
The pawns and pieces stand in line,
The Nazis call on Benes to
Resign.

Defeat beforehand to accept —
Like Schuschnigg, with a fools-mate floored
When Austria moved and Hitler swept
The board.

Great Britain with smooth-tongued advice,
Assiduous to non-intervene,
Prescribes that Benes sacrifice
His Queen.

The French enjoin resistance stout,
Defence against the Nazi snatch,
No handicap and playing out
The match.

Magyars, Rumanians and Poles
Wait for the Benes line to break.
Benes with fifteen million souls
At stake

Plays the Sudeten gambit first,
Manœuvring to save the State,
To force a draw and foil the worst —
Czechmate.

PAINTING THE LILY

'Herr Hitler . . . could not believe it impossible to prevent the Press in democratic countries from printing "lies and calumnies".' — *Daily Telegraph*, March 12th.

You cannot paint the lily, nor
The violet perfume,
You cannot gild a golden ore
Nor blacken midnight gloom;
The honour of the Reich no less
Can be disparaged by the Press.

For credit rests on no report
And deeds themselves explain,
No journal can the facts distort
Of Austria and Spain,
The most tendentious versions pale
Before that true unvarnished tale.

The Reich which arts and science learns
By light from Streicher's lamp;
The Reich where a Niemöller earns
A concentration camp,
To all the world appears to lie
Beyond the reach of calumny.

You cannot paint the lily, nor
Perfume the violet,
The records of the Reich outsoar
Newspaper epithet.
The Nazi State may rest content,
It is its own advertisement.

CALL OF THE BLOOD

Fatherland, Motherland,
Great as no other land,
Hero land, Hitler land
Calls to her own!
Nazis who seethe and boil,
Parked on a heathen soil,
Blood of her bloodstream and
Bone of her bone.

Bred as a race apart,
Born for a place apart,
Supermen reared on a
Racial hunch,
Goering's geography,
Streicher's pornography,
Hitler for breakfast and
Goebbels for lunch.

Hear the Reich call her own,
Give her back all her own,
Nazi minorities
Misunderstood!
All Europe's frantic ones,
All transatlantic ones,
Why don't they pack up and
Go home for good?

Where Hitler yearns for them,
Where the earth burns for them,
Where Goering guards them from
Every attack,
Ah, do not chain them more,
Do not constrain them more,
Let them turn homeward and
Never come back!

THERE ARE BOMBERS AT THE BOTTOM
OF MY GARDEN

[*With acknowledgments to Rose Fyleman*]

There are bombers at the bottom of my garden,
But I'm not a teeny weeny bit afraid,
'Cause good Sir Samuel Hoare told us long before the war
What to do for home protection in a raid.
So we've made a lovely refuge with brown paper
On the Nursery-Anti-Gas-Precautions Plan.
I 'spect some people doubt poison gas can be kept out —
Well, it can.

There are bombers at the bottom of my garden,
But experts say they won't be there for long,
'Cause our air-arm (one to three) will chase them out to sea
And our anti-aircraft guns are going strong.
I'm not the leastest bit surprised to see them,
'Cause Baldwin told us bombers *must* get through,
And I think it's awful good that we've got Sir Kingsley Wood —
Well, don't you?

There are bombers at the bottom of my garden,
But Inskip says that home's the safest place,
So we'll just sit here and wait in our 10 × 10 × 8,
And my dolly's got a gas-mask, just in case.
And if *our* bombers bomb *these* bombers' countries,
Well, foreign countries have *their* A.R.P.,
So no little girls and boys need be gassed among their toys,
And I hope they'll all be just as safe as me.

SO YOU'RE GOING ABROAD

When you hear the Call of Summer on Conducted Wonder Tours,
And plan the Land or Sea Inclusive Cruise,
Some features not included in the Holiday Brochures
May be gathered from the Continental news.

Will your Joy-Week in Gross-Deutschland at the minimum expense
Seem quite worthy of your rapture unrestrained,
When you're plucked out of your Pullman for some currency offence,
Arrested on suspicion and detained?

Might one even be the victim of some racial mistakes
In the barrack-ground till lately known as Wien?
Can a pilgrim to Locarno and to Stresa and the Lakes
Dodge one million Axis-Tourists from Berlin?

On cheap luxury excursions round St. Moritz and Lucerne,
All the Alpine Winter Playgrounds of the rich,
Does the Bureau make a rebate for precipitate return,
If Swiss-Germans catch the Pan-Teutonic itch?

Is a Culture-Cruise to Hellas not unsafe, to say the least,
Till well past Gibraltar's over-rated cliff?
Might your glamour glimpse of Tangier, mystic gateway to the East,
Not include some awful moments with the Riff?

If a Spa-ha near to Praha should accept your L.S.D.,
Will the next Sudeten Putsch leave time to quit?
On your Peep-Week in Dalmatia on the Adriatic Sea,
Might Croatians not burst open right in Split?

So despite the local colour and the wonderful exchange,
Would it not be really safest in the end
To keep away from Europe where the natives are so strange
And stick to 'Bonnie Braeside', at Southend?

THE AIR PRESUMPTIVE

Who shall succeed departed Reith?
To whom, in all sublunar space,
Can Britain suitably bequeath
His place?
Breathes there a being fit to sway
Reith's self-made Empire of the Air?
The Talking Mongoose is, they say,
Less rare.

Who could with monumental phlegm
Rebut the thankless licensees
Like him? Who, sleepless, watch the em-
ployees,
And guide them through this Age of Jazz —
A festal band no slur befouls,
Their private conduct open as
Their vowels?

Now public virtue is renewed
While aspirants the call await,
Self-questionings obsess the good
And great.
Now K.C.B.'s new heights achieve,
Now M.V.O.'s lead nobler lives,
Now O.B.E.'s no longer leave
Their wives.

The B.B.C. expects a sign,
Rapt in a sacramental hush;
The brooding Governors decline
To rush.
But to the millions listening in,
Somehow a wordless rumour's broached
That God has tentatively been
Approached.

OBSTACLES TO EXODUS

'The perpetual scapegoat, trussed up once and for all in the Nuremberg Laws . . . is . . . dragged out and punished over and over again.' — *New York Times*, June 22nd.

Caesars in Rome's Imperial seat
Fed lions Early Christian meat,
But folk of the New Testament
Rome counted less than one per cent.
And thus, despite official care
Not every lion got his share.

So now the nobler Nazi lion
Who mauls the naked flesh of Zion,
And for his German birthright claims
State quarry for the Streicher Games,
Though roaring for the tribal sport,
Like Caesar's King of Beasts, goes short.

The Reich preserves her Jews to kick
All round the body politic,
But folk of the Old Testament
Are counted less than one per cent,
So after each prescribed abuse
They are thrashed home for future use.

The Reich can therefore not discuss
Facilities for Exodus,
For if no Jew were left behind,
But just the Nazi and his kind,
What pastime could he practise then
To show himself the King of Men?

YE MARINERS OF FRANCO

Ye Mariners of England
That guard the Franco seas,
And watch him bombing British ships
With insolence and ease!
Your glorious standard never launch
Where crippled freighters crawl,
As ye race to the base
Till the bombs have ceased to fall!
Till cries for help are heard no more
And the bombs have ceased to fall.

The merchantmen adventurers
That Franco's killers brave,
Non-intervention is their hope,
Appeasement is their grave:
While Chamberlain like British oak
Withstands the British foe,
And replies with surprise
When the Commons storms do blow!
When Attlee rages loud and long
And the Commons storms do blow.

For Franco needs no navy
To strengthen his blockade
While Mariners of England lend
Invaluable aid!
Your valour gives the Fascists peace
To win the Fascist war
As ye sweep from the deep
Till Spain is Spain no more!
Until appeasement's star shall rise
And Spain is Spain no more.

SOUTHDOWN SUMMER

Then hey for a song of Sussex,
A song of the rolling Weald,
Of Muddlewood, Piddinghoe, Peacehaven, Wilmington,
Piltown and Wivelsfield!
Where Kipling, Belloc, Davidson,
Once sang their Sussex lay —
With sandwich-bags, orange-peel, newspapers, bottle-tops
Littering all the way!

Then hey for car and charabanc
And the sunswept Downland scene,
By Saltdean, Withdean, East Dean, Woodingdean,
Roedean and Rottingdean!
And lightly on the Sussex earth
Where the Romans laid their bones,
Strew fag-ends, match-sticks, nut-shells, tin cans,
Fruit-skins and ice-cream-cones!

LORD HALIFAX REGRETS

[*Acknowledgments to Miss Otis*]

'Captain Wiedemann suggested during his recent visit . . . that Goering might come to London. He had been instructed by Hitler to ascertain whether the Marshal could be guaranteed a favourable public reception. Lord Halifax replied he could give no such guarantee.' — *Evening Standard*, Aug. 6th.

Lord Halifax regrets he can't promise a welcome to-day,
Captain,
Lord Halifax greatly regrets to have to say

Though Goering were Britain's guest
With his medals upon his breast,
Lord Halifax regrets he *can't* promise a welcome to-day.

The Cabinet would be delighted to have you stay,
Marshal,
The ruling classes grieve at this delay,
Though at Cliveden you could spend
A *wunderschön* week-end,
Marshal,
Lord Halifax regrets he can't *promise* a welcome to-day.

The British public has lately been led astray,
Führer,
The people might or might not shout hurray.
It would seem so out of place
If they bashed in Goering's face,
Führer,
Lord Halifax regrets he can't promise a *welcome* to-day.

FRITTO MISTO

'The Italian race has remained pure for the last 2000 years.' — *La Difesa della Razza*, Rome.

When Alaric mopped up in Rome
With his totalitarians,
Italians dames were not at home
To visiting barbarians,
Disdaining to supply the Goth
With Teuton offspring hardy,
As later they withheld their troth
From lovesick Langobardi.

Their way was equally abrupt
With overlords Byzantine,
Lest Roman blood they might corrupt
With influence levantine.
These steadfast virgins spurned like dirt
The decadent Hellenic,
And never would so much as flirt
With Emirs Saracenic.

Invaders of two thousand years,
Not always of the purest,
Left fewer racial souvenirs
Than any summer tourist.
The mothers of the Coming Race
Abhorred miscegenation
And substituted in its place
Parthenogeneration.

Thus their posterity retains
No trace of alien foemen,
Not Fifty-Seven Heinz-like strains
But just the antique Roman!
So Fascists learn eugenic lore
And racial boloney
And hope to look like Caesar more,
And less like Al Capone.

ADVICE TO AGGRESSORS

Meine Herren and Signori,
Clients of the British Tory,
Kindly note that Number 10
Requests your patronage again.
Opening, as from to-day,
As Chamberlain et Daladier,
Messrs. Hoare, Laval, successors,
For doing business with aggressors.

Frontiers promptly liquidated,
Coups d'état consolidated,
Pledges taken and exchanged,
Acquisitions rearranged,
Loans on Fascist risks advanced,
Nazi enterprise financed,
European intervention
Given personal attention.
Have you problems of Partition?
Let us send a British Mission.

Breaking with Geneva's firms,
We offer Nazis favoured terms;
Let us lend to back your claim
England's honourable name,
For dirty deals both great and small
Our representative will call.
Orders carried out with speed,
Satisfaction guaranteed.
We obsequiously remain,
Daladier et Chamberlain.

WILL YOU, WON'T YOU?

'There is reason to suspect that both Great Britain and France were preparing to bring yet more pressure on the Czechs. This is behind the French suggestion that Lord Runciman should be asked to produce yet another plan.' — Vernon Bartlett (*News Chronicle*, Sept. 15th).

'Will you give a little farther?' said his lordship to the Czechs,
'There's a gentleman behind us I should really hate to vex,
I have taken on a mission to maintain the open door,
So to prove co-operation will you give a little more?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you give a little more?

'I shall use to your advantage every token of goodwill,
So do your part by giving way a little farther still.'
Then said the Czechs, 'Our formulas already number four.'
And they thanked his lordship kindly but could not give any more,
Could not, would not, could not, would not give a little more.

His lordship said, 'You've no idea how lovely it would be,
If you'd just give way completely and leave all the rest to me;
The fruitful paths of compromise I would again explore,
(As a purely private person), if you gave a little more?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you give a little more?'

The Czechs said mediation would be greatly simplified,
If concessions were requested in a quarter still untried,
His lordship answered that this view he must indeed deplore,
If they found themselves unable to concede a little more,
If they would not, could not, would not, could not give a little more.

He pointed out how steadily and surely they'd advance,
Secure in the assurances of Britain and of France,
But they answered in a strain that shocked his lordship to the core,
That they feared non-intervention if they gave a little more,
So would not, could not, would not, could not give a little more.

THE DESCENT OF MAN

'An emergency trench . . . can be rapidly made in a garden. The depth suggested is 4ft. 6in. The roof should slope slightly so that rain-water may drain off and should be covered with two or three inches of earth to hold it down.' — *The Times*, Sept. 26th.

For this, man's handiwork was wrought,
For this he heavenward aspired,
For this his philosophic thought
Of universal truth inquired,
And all his science comes to this
Derogatory Nemesis.

The long achievement of the mind,
The Law's majestic edifice,
Arts for man's benefit designed,
All time's inventions come to this,
That people with immortal souls
Must crawl like beetles into holes.

Emancipated from the ape
So long to wear creation's crown,
A little surface soil we scrape
And living in the earth lie down,
Abandoning the godlike view
To squirm below as vermin do.

With drains and ditches for our tomb
We scurry underground to hide,
And there await the insect's doom,
In torrents of insecticide.
As man's exterminating bomb
Rounds off his epic martyrdom.

READY! STEADY! STOP!

'After all, there are no secrets now about what happened in the air and in the mobilization of our anti-aircraft defences . . . Who pretends that our anti-aircraft defences were adequately manned or armed? . . . There has been a gross neglect and deficiency in our defences.' — Mr. Churchill, House of Commons, Oct. 5th.

Give thanks to all who sidetracked war,
To each peacemaking hero,
When every hope appeared to mock,
When pacifism died of shock,
When even the deaf could hear the clock
Already striking zero.

So to Daladier, give thanks,
Give Chamberlain his statue,
To Mussolini, aiding both,
Vote heartfelt thanks, however loath,
For bounding from the undergrowth
To circumvent the *battue*.

For his great part give Benes thanks,
Give Roosevelt acclamation
That Mars is cheated of his feast,
That we ourselves are not deceased,
That Prague has not been made at least
The pyre of Czech cremation.

Thank all who steered our peaceward course
And all who keep it steady,
Thank our own backbone, Britain's boast,
And thank our Navy at its post,
But thank Sir Thomas Inskip most
Because he was not ready.

THE LOST WARDEN

Meeting one day with a Warden
Towards the end of the peace,
He showed me his respirator
With never a crack or crease.

It was kept in a tin container,
Its valves were the Warden's pride,
And facepiece and filter and harness
He tenderly wiped and dried.

He named all the poison gases,
I leaned on my new-found friend,
Nor knew as I spoke to the Warden
That peace had drawn to an end.

As he unslung his respirator,
As he went on his Warden's rounds,
He was hit by a high explosive
Weighing over 2000 lbs.

We were seated in Kensington Gardens
When he fitted his gas-mask on,
But we found the head of the Warden
In the borough of Paddington.

I have sought and I still seek vainly
To gather his million bits,
But I know that the Warden in Heaven
Will be glad that *his gas-mask fits*.

SEVEN AGAINST PLEBS

This week's reconstructed Cabinet consists of one Marquess, three Earls, two Viscounts, one Baron, five Knights, and only eight Esquires. — Nov. 5th.

How shall our Government be saved from Attlee's hunnish hordes?
By wholesale elevation to the safety of the Lords',
Secure from such as foul their nests for all the world to see
And launder in a public way their dirty lingerie.
But the reconstructed Cabinet, however much it cheers,
Has too many commoners,
Too many commoners,
Too many commoners and not sufficient peers.

As, sheltered long from Mr. Churchill's communist attacks,
Rough winds of heaven are not beteemed to visit Halifax,
No Opposition questioning the new First Lord will vex,
Or Runciman, promoted for his service to the Czechs,
While for his shadow-cabinet our Premier fills the breach
With governmental silences,
With monumental silences,
Propitiating silences more eloquent than speech.

Why keep untitled Ministers for Labour Party slights,
Or even the Government's quintet of quintessential Knights,
When every time retiring Lords create an aching blank
There are persons for the Office of the very highest rank?
Though the Cabinet reshuffle will allay Dictators' fears,
Here are too many commoners,
Too many commoners,
Too many commoners and not sufficient peers.

UNDER WHICH FLAG?

[*After Rudyard Kipling*]

'Uncertainty as to the future sovereignty of Tanganyika Territory is destroying its social and economic structure . . . The Government are fully aware of the uncertainty and anxiety . . . but they are not in a position to add to the pronouncements which have been made in the past.' — *The Times*, Oct. 25th.

'A resolution was passed that a declaration should be sent to the King, if the Imperial Government did not within a short space of time announce that Tanganyika, now held under a League Mandate, would become a British Colony.' — *Daily Telegraph*, Nov. 1st.

Lords of Whitehall, give answer! They are whinnying to and fro,
And how can they answer at Whitehall what only the Führer can
know?

Shall a rabble of rascal planters create a colonial snag?
They are lifting their heads in the stillness to yelp for the English flag!

Never a shore so thriving, where the Reich flag once was flown
But, forfeit of Britain's Empire, the Third Reich claims for its own,
Unfurling its standards to follow a Goebbelized plebescite
From the waters of Lake Tanganyika to Kilimanjaro's height.

While big breeds arm and chaffer, while lesser breeds are swapped,
Shall mandatees of the run-down League discover their right to opt?
The swastika swings to the zenith; the Führer screams to the mike;
And Whitehall stands to the halliards, waiting the word to strike.

Is the jackal robbed of its meat, is the weasel baulked of its prey?
They ha' cursed the loss of the Southern Cross and who shall say them
nay?

They may not ask of England; they are whinnying to and fro!
But how can Whitehall answer, when Whitehall does not know?

WE'LL GO NO MORE A-ROMEING

'The Italian Government never intended to send air reinforcements compensatory to the infantry withdrawn.' — Prime Minister, Nov. 2nd.

'Although Italy has withdrawn 10,000 worn-out troops from Spain, from middle of September to middle of October she sent 49 planes, 5000 fresh troops and thousands of tons of war material.' — *Daily Telegraph*, Nov. 22nd.

So, we'll go no more a-meeting,
A plan for Spain to find,
Though Rome be still a-cheating,
And our hearts are still as kind.

For the mask outwears the face,
And the breach wears out the ban,
And the facts must change the case
And the Pact consume the plan.

Though our way be still as winding
And our goal be still as plain,
Yet we'll go no more a-finding
A formula for Spain.

THE REASON

A rather extreme vegetarian,
Looked down from his summit Bavarian,
He said: 'It's not odd
I'm superior to God,
For the Latter's not even an Aryan.'

ALTERNATIVES

For the Duce's inflated ideas
We can offer but two panaceas —
Either give him Gibraltar,
Suez, Cyprus, and Malta,
Or a kick in the Pantellarias.

KITES

'In the autumn of 1937 *The Times* . . . threw out a cautious suggestion that the union of Austria with Germany might be desirable . . . The article was repudiated at Whitehall. In September, 1938, *The Times* threw out a cautious suggestion that the Sudeten-German areas might be ceded . . . the article was officially repudiated. In December, 1938, *The Times* threw out a cautious suggestion that Franco might be accorded belligerent rights.' — Douglas Reed, *World Review*, January.

Once more by densest fog surrounded,
Appeasement's murky moves progress,
The Munich *motif*, sweetly sounded,
Fresh Axis enterprise may bless.
We cease to hope for 'No' or 'Yes'
From those who England's darkness guide,
Of rumour we can only guess
It's not official until denied.

When Whitehall owns itself astounded
At some unsanctioned *Times* excess,
When Ministers are quite dumbfounded
And total ignorance profess,

By feats of Government finesse
Strip-teasing what they seem to hide,
That news is gospel, more or less,
It's not official until denied.

Are colonies to be impounded
The crime of Versailles to redress?
Will City charity unbounded
Aid worthy Nazis in distress?
Without suspicion of duress
Is Franco to be satisfied
While Parliament is in recess?
It's not official until denied.

One clue unerring we possess,
The old *Times* kite is always tried.
Observe the *canard à la presse*,
It's not official until denied.

DE MORTUIS NIL NISI MALUM

'The League . . . identified change with aggression, forgetting that what is called aggression may be the only remedy against . . . injustice.' — Scrutator, *Sunday Times*, Jan. 15th.

With every diminishing Session
The League is more clearly to blame
For classing as acts of aggression
The Fascist's legitimate claim;
The habit of joint accusations
At each insignificant rape
Provoking the mass violations
Now changing the Continent's shape.

This ideologic position
Could not but alarm and estrange
Ex-members who urged recognition
For armed methods of peaceable change.
Now causes of crisis are fewer
While peace remains almost intact,
Much water has flowed through the sewer
Since Laval sold the League for a pact.

The League was a palpable blunder,
A perfectly hopeless ideal,
The Covenant doomed to go under
Once realists dared to be real.
Geneva is dead, damned and rotten,
Appeasement will yet save our skin —
So perhaps it is better forgotten
That the League put the Government in.

NIGHTMARE NOSTRUM

[Acknowledgments to the Poet Laureate]

Submarines from Kiel and Wilhelmshafen
Plunging through the deep seas at the dolphin's pace,
Slipping under Biscay,
Past Gibraltar,
Headed for Morocco and the Fascist base.

Italy's destroyers strung across the trade-routes,
Cruisers and torpedo-boats on sleepless guard,
Off Sardinia,
Majorca, Ceuta,
From Sicily to Africa the sea-gates barred.

France's battle-cruisers dodging out of Toulon,
Darting from Ajaccio, and brought up short,
Severed from Bizerta,
Algiers, Tunis,
Syria and Beirut and Jibuti Port.

Battleships of Britain with merchant convoys
Bottled in the narrows by the Axis Fleet,
Jostled out of Malta,
Cyprus, Haifa,
Suez, Alexandria and the Red Sea beat.

THANKSGIVING

Our task is completed,
War-prophets defeated,
The path of appeasement successfully shown
By making concessions
Of others' possessions
In the full expectation of keeping our own.

Since Czech sacrifices
Averted the crisis
Our future is lightened of darkness and doubt,
For Nazi constriction
Need never cause friction
While Europe's supply of small countries holds out.

To make Arabs happy
Is now on the *tapis*
By dropping a Mandate too hot to control;
Nor will France-in-the-manger
Appeasement endanger
If Tunis be all between us and our goal.

Minorca's submission
Assures our position,
And when Spain is at last of Republican rid,
To immense acclamations
From pacified nations
Our next conversations will be in Madrid!

ONCE MORE UNTO THE PEACE

'Mr. Chamberlain always travels with a pocket Shakespeare.' —
Daily Telegraph, Feb. 23rd.

Once more unto the peace, dear friends, once more,
And wean aggressors with our English gold!
Costly our armament as purse can buy,
For, while we are in silken dalliance led,
Come the Dictators of the world in arms,
And they will shock us; they will shock this England,
This precious stone set in a sea of troubles.
Let me with cyphers for this great accompt
On your imaginary terrors work,
While armourers are closing up the gaps
With note of aimless preparation.
You all know this umbrella: I remember
When first I flew with it to Berchtesgaden,
The day I overthrew democracy,
For thine especial safety. Follow it!
It beckons you, a most miraculous organ,
And none so Left but does it reverence.
See these few precepts we in memory keep.
Give every man our voice but few our aid:
Be ever strong upon the stronger side:
This above all — to our own class be true;

And it must follow, as the boom the slump,
We cannot then astonish any man.
Methinks I am a prophet new-inspired!
Friends, Britons, countrymen, lend me your cash;
Cry 'Jitterbug!' and pay the price of peace
To profiteers, gaping for increment.

NO OBLIGATION

'It will be generally agreed that there is no . . . obligation upon the British Government to take any direct action in the present developments in Central Europe.' — *The Times*, March 14th.

Czechoslovakia meets her fate
Disarmed, enslaved and carved in three.
Though Britain guaranteed the State
No State exacts a guarantee
When it has ceased to be.

Through Munich, Prague, and yet beyond
Appeasement's path must be pursued;
Democracy need not despond
While Briton's word is still as good
As Hitler's bond.

Though tolerant in deed and word
Of Powers that murder, cheat and lie,
Our hands are clean, our purpose high,
And through the world our voice is heard —
Live and let die!

STANDING FIRM

'The annexation of Czechoslovakia may be the act of a much-worried man in a hurry.' — Scrutator in *Sunday Times*, March 26th.

When Führers lie, it's something of a shock
And budding shoots of confidence are bruised,
While rumours of a democratic *bloc*
Attest to counsels wild and minds confused;
But after some few days of taking stock
The inexcusable may be excused,
(Though certain Powers would advocate suppression
Suppose another ventured on aggression).

Encirclement is not Great Britain's end,
Nor is collective action her design,
But to inquire on whom she might depend
In case the situation should decline,
And she herself be called on to defend
Herself, if menaced from beyond the Rhine,
(Though by no means at one with world opinion
That any single Power seeks world dominion).

Great Britain takes her stand on right and law,
Condoning breaches with unfeigned regret,
And neither will the outstretched hand withdraw,
And neither truckle to the naked threat.
Some final provocation, or last straw
She waits, which has not been presented yet,
Resolved meantime to go to any distance
To fortify the line of least resistance.

SNARKING

Snark: chimerical animal of ill-defined characteristics and potentialities. Lewis Carroll. — *Oxford Dictionary*.

'Just the place for a Snark,' the Captain said,
As he hoisted the Pact with the Poles —
'Though lubbers ashore may see breakers ahead,
I am bent upon hugging the shoals.'

'Our craft,' he continued, 'is safe as a Bank,'
And he rubbed out the whole of the log —
'Were my chart not a perfect and absolute blank
We might all have been shipwrecked on Zog!'

His easy assurance encouraged the crew
And its secret they begged him to tell.
So the Captain replied: 'When about to collide
There is nothing like tingling a bell'.

'Though fogbound,' he added in musical tones,
'We may fearlessly steam after Snarks,
If together we cling singing God Save the King
And throw men overboard for the sharks.'

They sought it with paper, they sought it with pacts,
They pursued it with shares and soft soap,
With autographs, gammon, persuasion and tracts,
They wooed it with pens and hope.

Till 'At last!' cried the lookout, 'the Snark is in sight,'
And they ran up the notice called D.
Then the ship and the Captain both capsized outright
For the Snark was a Boojum, you see.

CASTLE IN SPAIN

'Nothing that has happened has in any way altered my conviction that . . . the Anglo-Italian agreement was right.' — Prime Minister, April 13th, 1939.

Believe me, though every fond pledge guaranteed
By the Treaty of Bon Voisinage
Should appear to observers about to recede
To the regions of roseate mirage,
Those vistas undimmed with fresh rapture I view
That landscape in fancy explore
And around the dear ruin, hope, springing anew,
Is more verdant than ever before.

It is not while contracts and vows are obeyed
That the fervour of faith is made plain,
But when confident trust is profaned and betrayed
Again and again and again.
No the heart that once hoped must hope on to the last,
With credulity more than sublime,
As the criminal trusting all danger is past
Still revisits the scene of the crime.

SEEDS OF LOVE

[*Acknowledgments to Macdonald and Tate*]

'The British Ambassador, Sir William Seeds, had another talk with the Foreign Commissar, M. Litvinoff.' — Moscow wire, *Daily Telegraph*, April 22nd.

VERSE

Loving hearts are sundered in London and Berlin,
Discords mar love's sweet refrain;
Chamberlain is striving coy Stalin's heart to win
As he tells the old, old story once again.
Though he feel dismay at true love's delay
And the steppes are freezing hard,
His tender questionnaire
Is heard upon the air
In tones of almost diffident regard:

CHORUS

'If I should plant my tiny Seeds of love
In the garden of your heart,
Would they grow to be a great big pact one day
And frighten the Axis right away,
Would you trust in me as far as you could see,
(Ideologies apart,)
If I should plant my tiny Seeds of love
In the garden of your heart?'

THEY GOT WHAT THEY WANTED

'This great meeting . . . expresses its earnest hope . . . that the Nationalist cause will gain an early triumph for unity, order, liberty and religious freedom.' — Friends of National Spain, Queen's Hall, March 23rd, 1938.

The friends of Nationalist Spain
Who prayed for Franco's settlement
Regardless of material gain,
With Spain's well-being well content,
At last may publicly rejoice
Her good old order is restored;
Her people have declared their choice —
And friendship is its own reward.

Though Nazi Party enterprise
Will British interests displace,
Though legionaries mobilize
In bristling camp and beetling base,
Though Franco dam the stream of trade
His friends still give their glad accord,
Armed intervention must be paid
But friendship is its own reward.

The extirpation of the Red
The victor of all blame acquits,
Who saved the day for Christ instead
With Heinkels, Fiats and Messerschmidts.
Where liberty and faith return
Mere business claims may be ignored,
So British friends of Franco learn
That friendship is its own reward.

THE DIEHARD'S FAREWELL

Turn my face to St. James's as falls the eventide
They will hear at the Club to-morrow how a Tory Diehard died;
Give me my port and coffee and my favourite cigar
And round my knees wrap the panther rug I potted in Coosh Behar.
Here's my letter to tell *The Times* how a Diehard took to bed
The day he heard a Tory chief would make a pact with the Red.

Pass the Napoleon brandy, my strength is failing fast,
The country bound for the dogs so long has gone to the dogs at last,
Not by a Liberal hothead, not by a Labour cad,
But by a Conservative Premier stabbed in the back, by Gad!
I've kept a stiff upper lip through life, a Diehard born and bred,
But even a Diehard dies at last when they make a pact with the Red.

STALLED

'Any unrequested foreign aid will be regarded as an act of hostility and repelled.' — Finnish Foreign Minister, June 8th.

That the Finn should regard with suspicion
A front of Great Britain's devising,
Imperils the peace coalition,
In a manner abrupt and surprising.

Whitehall is profoundly regretful
At the set-back to fruitful discussion,
When the Premier, of German forgetful,
Can just say *Tovarish* in Russian.

Not all diplomatic endeavour
Can this rooted repugnance diminish,
The Powers may swap peace-pacts for ever
But it looks like a fight to the Finnish.

THE MAZE

'In the House of Commons yesterday Mr. Chamberlain would not agree that various proposals put forward by Britain and Russia should be made public.' — *Manchester Guardian*, July 13th.

They steer it through the Kremlin maze
Removed from human sight,
A pact few Tories care to praise
And none to expedite.

Rejecting guides, the British grope
Down that alluring trail,
Drawn onwards by a kind of hope
Seen through a kind of veil.

It serves not public weal to know
What they would not discuss,
But they have lost their way, and oh,
The difference to us.

THE ROAD TO TOKYO

[*Acknowledgments to Mandalay*]

By Britain's old concession, now blockaded at Tientsin,
They strip the White Race passing out, they slap it passing in;
The Rising Sun rides high, they say, our sun is sinking low,
But we're working out a formula to settle Tokyo.

On the road to Tokyo
Our instructions are *Go slow*,
(Hear the *Nichi-Nichi* cackle, and the *Hochi Shimbun* crow!)
While prepared to strike a blow
For aggression's overthrow,
We have sent a British Mission on the road to Tokyo.

Our close commercial friendship is Nippon's dearest wish,
Our market ever open for all kinds of stinking fish,
Our course in foreign policy her threats cannot compel
But her special rights in China must be recognized as well.

So, it is not hard to tell
By that well-known fishy smell,
That our delegates are ready to negotiate a sell
In the talks at Tokyo.

Good-bye to League commitments and all idealistic traps,
We really have no quarrel with the gallant little Japs,
When Britons are insulted we are bound to make a show
So we talk a lot of honour, but the clever Japs will know.

Clever little Japs will know
Just how far we mean to go,
They can see the 'buses running from the Bank to Tokyo.
Tides of conquest ebb and flow
By the Yang-Tse and Hwang-Ho
But the silver key to China may change hands at Toyko.

THE TRUSTEE

'The well-being and development of people not yet able to stand by themselves is a sacred trust of civilization.' — Lord Halifax, June 30th.

'I don't feel happy about the way our power is being used in the West Indies and other parts.' — Ramsay Muir, Aug. 9th.

Wherever flies the Union Jack
In warm Imperial air,
All races yellow, brown and black
The Briton's birthright share.
And he who fights for subjects' rights
Is not accused of wrong,

Excepting perhaps in Mauritius, Jamaica, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone,
Rhodesia, North Borneo, Antigua and Hong-kong.

Where the Colonial Office rules
O'er palmy tropic scenes,
No subject learns at Mission schools
What exploitation means.
No laws prevent their betterment,
Free speech is smiled upon,
Excepting perhaps in Burma, Cyprus, Nigeria, Trinidad, Malaya,
Sarawak, St. Helena and Ceylon.

Where Britain for the Empire's good
Performs her sacred trust,
Crude problems of wage servitude
Need never be discussed.
Rule that reveals her high ideals
The whole world venerates,
With the possible exception of the Continent of Europe, the Soviet,
the Near East, the Far East, South America, Mexico and the United
States.

NERVES

[Sept. 2nd, 1939]

I think I'll get a paper,
I think I'd better wait.
I'll hear the news at six o'clock,
That's much more up to date.

It's just like last September,
Absurd how time stands still;
They're bound to make a statement.
I don't suppose they will.

I think I'd better stroll around.
Perhaps it's best to stay.
I think I'll have a whisky neat,
I can't this time of day.

I think I'll have another smoke.
I don't know what to do.
I promised to ring someone up,
I can't remember who.

They say it's been averted.
They say we're on the brink.
I'll wait for the 'New Statesman',
I wonder what they think.

They're shouting. It's a Special.
It's not. It's just street cries.
I think the heat is frightful.
God damn these bloody flies.

I see the nation's keeping cool,
The public calm is fine.
This crisis can't shake England's nerves.
It's playing hell with mine.

COMMAND PERFORMANCE

At 9 a.m., September 1st, 1939, German bombers attack Polish towns.

'Let there be war' he said and as he spoke
The war cloud broke.
Alone he launched upon the swelling scene
The war machine,
And so upon the last of Hitler's shows
The curtain rose.

The act unfolds. Reich bandsmen plug once more
The hackneyed score,
The strutting Führer postures in the lead,
Spotlit Siegfried,
While to accompany his world-famed turn,
Ships drown, homes burn.

Reich supers hail the conflagration vast
As unsurpassed,
But we who watch with less admiring eyes
The curtain rise
Make known the Führer will not take the call
When it shall fall.

WEATHER REPORT

In time of war all weather reports are forbidden by the Censor

A hurricane
From the Polish plain
Is travelling westward fast.
Wind moderates
In the Balkan States
But skies are overcast.

East of Berlin
Bright spells set in,
Moscow is fine and warm,
But squalls that blow
From the Maginot
Foretell advancing storm.

The French report
Bright periods (short),
Some fog round Whitehall lies,
But watching posts
Round British coasts
State temperature tends to rise.

Main inference —
Cloud dark and dense,
A European cyclone,
Gales in succession,
A deep depression,
And further outlook, unknown.

HOOTS! TOOTS!

‘For the first time since the war began German bombers reached the shores of Great Britain yesterday . . . An extremely unsatisfactory feature was the complete failure of the warning sirens.’ — *Daily Telegraph*, Oct. 17th.

Not a blast was heard, nor a warbling sound,
Not a whistle or even a rattle,
But pieces of bomb that kept falling around
Announced an aerial battle.

Not a deb tripped forth in her siren suit
With respirator held ready,
Not a hooter after the warning hoot
Gave the ‘all clear’ cheering and steady.

The raiders raided in broad daylight
And recklessly city dwellers
Stood at their doorways to watch the fight
Instead of cowering in cellars.

They did not huddle in helpless hosts
With panic freezing their marrows
Till wardens charged from the wardens' posts
To force them to follow the arrows.

Rebuked from above for their curious lapse
The wardens, indignant, objected
The cause of the trouble might be perhaps,
That the raiders were so unexpected.

They could not help thinking it rather too hard,
Without, of course, wishing to back-out,
That a bomber by daylight had caught them off guard —
They were waiting for raids in the black-out.

This message was then to the nation conveyed
That in future, at midnight or morning,
Though we still might have warnings without any raid
We would not have a raid without warning.

STILL I'LL BE PRIME MINISTER

[To the tune of 'The Vicar of Bray']

In World Appeasement's golden days
I led the British nation
By devious diplomatic ways
To reconciliation;
I strained to keep the world from war
According to my plan, Sir,
But found the German Chancellor
Was not a gentleman, Sir.

The Peace-Front next I patronized
With wondrous expedition,
A course *ad nauseam* advised
By Labour's Opposition;
My Peace-Front, nipped by Russian frost,
Was destined not to be, Sir,
But England never, never lost
Full confidence in me, Sir.

Though once I gave aggression's hand
A friendly Tory pressure,
To-day with Socialists I stand
To fight the armed aggressor.
And since all Parties must concur
Till Europe's wrongs are righted,
I still shall be Prime Minister
To lead a land united.

These transpositions bold and deft
Are my peculiar glory,
Which make the purpose of the Left
The programme of the Tory;
And though Great Britain's leftward bent
To some seem dark and sinister,
Whatever be our Government
I'll still remain Prime Minister.

DRANG NACH DEUTSCHLAND

'German nationals are being expelled from the Baltic States. Similar action is expected elsewhere.' — News item.

Teutons come to the Führer's call.

Sieg Heil!

His Reich has *Lebensraum* for all.

Sieg Heil!

With yet one more dynamic stroke

The Führer frees his far-flung Folk,

The Nordic blood snaps the ape man's yoke!

Sieg Heil!

From all the earth's subhuman States,

Bravo!

The Reich her own repatriates.

Bravo!

No Balt, blood-brother to the brute,

The Teuton now shall persecute,

The Nordic flower seeks the Nordic root.

Bravo!

Back to the Reich from the Balkan bloc,

Hurra!

To its sacred soil streams the German stock.

Hurra!

As far away under Roosevelt's lash

The Nordic Breed spurns the mongrel trash,

It can hardly wait for the homeward dash.

Hurra!

No Power shall stem that primal thrust,
Nicht wahr?
You can't see the Ruling Race for dust,
Nicht wahr?
Her tortured children the Reich has won,
The *Drang nach Deutschland* has begun,
And a crashing good thing for everyone.
Nicht wahr?

HOME SERVICE

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8 a.m.

'There is no new French communiqué.
In well-informed circles they say
Trade talks may soon be under way,
But we cannot yet ascertain whose.
The Council of War has conferred.
Some gunfire by neutrals was heard.
Some action at outposts occurred.
And that's the end of the news.

1 p.m.

'An Agency message last night
Describes a reconnaissance flight,
But over what ground, at what height,
There are so far (I'm sorry) no clues.
Off Sweden some smoke has been seen
Which may indicate some submarine.
On the Western Front all is serene.
And that's the end of the news.

4 p.m.

'Information has just been supplied
Camouflage has been recently tried
Our Air Force positions to hide,
(A highly ingenious ruse.)
From France strict reserve is maintained,
Some gunfire has not been explained.
It has semi-officially rained.
And that's the end of the news.

6 p.m.

'In the communiqué we repeat
Official reserve is complete.
According to Reuter, the Fleet
Has captured (I'm sorry) some crews.
Reconnaissance flights have been flown,
Important results have been shown.
The Market closed firmer in tone.
And that's the end of the news.

9 p.m.

'Some talks are proceeding somewhere.
We are ready by land, sea and air.
The War Council has met to compare
Completely identical views.
The French communiqué on the war
States that all is the same as before.
(I'm sorry, I'll read that once more)
And that's the end of the news.'

THE BLIGHT OF ASIA

[*An Indian Love Lyric, after Laurence Hope*]

The bulbuls were about to sing,
The temple bells about to ring,
For the marriage-month the soul of India yearned,
When the Viceroy sent a chit
That the season was not fit
So the nuptials were considered as adjourned.

Summoned to the Viceroy's side
Near relations of the bride,
Alarmed for India's honour and renown,
Stipulated for a date
When the *raj* would terminate
Her irregular relations with the Crown.

India, helpless to escape
Past experience of rape,
To nothing short of wedlock would agree,
Nor her lawful claims resign
As Linlithgow's concubine
For innumerable viceregal cups of tea.

Still the Viceroy's frigid sloth
Fails to consummate their troth
And set her throned beside him in Durbar,
So until the marriage moon,
Temple bells are out of tune,
And the bulbuls are all asking where they are.
Ah!

WAR ECONOMY

Now England has pooled her resources
And the national effort directs,
While her children join up with the forces
With the *élan* that England expects,
Not all can be marching and drilling
But all can show *esprit de corps*,
We others are cheerful and willing
But we cannot get into the war.

We can help by not showing resistance
To authoritarian control,
Till all are on public assistance
Excepting for those on the dole;
We can help in the nation's endeavour
By enrolling as never before,
But the lists are all full up for ever,
So we cannot get into the war.

We can help by an effort concerted
In directions officially shown
Till everyone's debts are converted
For investment in Government Loan,
For the finding of millions and millions,
And billions and trillions more
Is the only job left for civilians
Who cannot get into the war.

No tittle our firmness relaxes
Till justice (with peace) we restore,
But we can't raise the cash for the taxes
If we cannot get into the war.

A SCIENTIFIC ARM

'What, teacher, can that object be inside a plate-glass drum?'
'It is Prof. Haldane whom you see, testing a vacuum.'

'Why are they hurling bombs so near that shelter made of tin?'
'That is a bombproof test, I hear, Prof. Haldane is within.'

'Oh, look! From yon balloon so high what dangles large and limp?'
'It is Prof. Haldane, we espy, air testing from a blimp.'

'See drifting near the waterside that buoy of strange design!'
'That is Professor Haldane, tied, decoying of a mine.'

'On sea, on shore and in the air, protecting us from harm,
Prof. Haldane meets us everywhere — our scientific arm.'

GOOD KING WENCESLAS LOOK'D OUT

Good King Wenceslas look'd out
Where the victors vaunted,
Death and terror stalked about
Fear his people haunted.
No bells chimed across the snows,
Heaven and earth seemed sleeping,
But the sighs of watchers rose
And the sound of weeping.

'Bitter is the bread we eat,
All our fires are ashes,
Bondage know we and defeat,
Feel the tyrant's lashes.
Mercy of the wolf we plead,
Of the butcher pity,
See our murdered children bleed
In our murdered City.

‘Tricked by foe and sold by friend,
Sentenced to subjection,
Must this be our story’s end,
Stripped of all protection?
Must we sink in slavery
Saint- and God-forsaken?’

‘No! your living shall be free
And your Dead awaken!’

PEACE AIM

‘I am inclined to think the Führer knows his Germans. Amongst the masses who have nothing at stake there is observable a certain amount of *Schadenfreude*.’

‘Recent events have revealed to me a facet of the German character which I had not suspected . . . This outbreak of sadistic cruelty.’ —
Extracts from White Paper, Germany No. 2, 1939.

When the war has been finally won,
We are counselled in speeches and sermons,
To make certain that nothing is done
To wound or discourage the Germans.
We must strictly exclude from our aims
Suspicion of punitive measures,
But how can we deal with their claims
To their popular national pleasures?

When regenerate Germany asks,
On resumption of friendly relations,
To shoulder her share of the tasks
That are common to civilized nations,
Can her people abandon the cult
In which they so gleefully revelled
With the not unpredicted result
That they’re morally somewhat dishevelled?

What pastimes and games will be left
If humans no longer are hounded,
And arson and slander and theft
By legal deterrents surrounded?
Must they close down their torture-resorts
So greatly enjoyed by S.A. boys
And spoil the legitimate sports
Of Himmler's uproarious playboys?

When the Nazis are held a disgrace
And a scapegoat is made of their saviour,
Can we hope that this thoroughbred race
Will abandon Germanic behaviour?
When even his critics concede
That what made his régime so successful
Was his sense of his countrymen's need
For a hearty debauch in the cesspool?

While we own admiration extreme
For the Germans' historical glories,
Their manner of letting off steam
Shows something's gone wrong with their *mores*;
Their title may not be denied
To their *lieder*, their lager, their treasures,
But can civilization provide
For their rather peculiar pleasures?

CASUS BELISHA

When Whitehall brews a private storm
Dense clouds the sacred precincts muffle
While the Olympians perform
A shuffle.

When Ministers creep out or in,
'Mid silence and suspense acute,
It shows there is a rift within
The lute.

But painful difference was there none
The day that Hore-Belisha fell,
A Minister had seldom done
So well.

To implement a policy
By all the Cabinet approved
Seems insufficient ground to be
Removed.

Therefore conjecture seeks the cause
In simple faith, or garbled fact,
Or some infringement of the laws
Of tact.

And some suspect another case
Of common military pique
While others confidently trace
A clique.

Nor can the Government evade
Erroneous but widespread rumour
That somebody has somehow made
A bloomer,
Until the Premier takes control
And, laying all the story bare,
Sheds floods of darkness on the whole
Affair.

THE LONG VIEW

When Englishmen, inviting war, inquired what they were fighting for
And called on the Prime Minister to clarify their aim,
His wonted reciprocity assuaged their curiosity,
'We fight the State-monstrosity that bears Herr Hitler's name.'

'We purpose with celerity to liberate posterity,
Pursuing with severity some two or three years' war.'
But since we thus align ourselves, why in advance confine ourselves?
It's wiser to resign ourselves to something rather more.

For as aggressors multiply all reckoning they stultify,
Fresh depredations justify new cause for nervous dread;
While rampant ideology makes hay without apology
We do not need astrology to see what lies ahead.

But history's consolation is, whatever the duration is,
While harassed generations suffer hardship unsurpassed,
Though warfare be laborious and foes at first victorious,
In battles, it's notorious, we always win the last.

DEAD MEN'S SHOES

'It resolves itself into a question of supply and demand. The unforeseen lull in the opening stages of the war has not created the anticipated demand. We have not had long lists of casualties leaving serious gaps in the commissioned ranks . . . hence discontent amongst officer reserves at home.' — War Office Departmental Chief (*Daily Telegraph*, Feb. 12th).

When the gallant ex-officer craves a commission
And meets with a frigid official response,
It means that the war of blockade and attrition
Has no need of his gallantry just for the nonce.

The lag has a perfectly logical reason,
It is merely a case of demand and supplies,
The cannon refusing their fodder this season
The looked-for emergency does not arise.

The War on the West Front is one of those gambles,
With no one proposing the slightest advance,
But until the whole line is a bit of a shambles
There's not even standing-room 'somewhere in France'.
Every foot of the front is successfully guarded,
Inaction proceeds in a regular groove,
But the call to reservists is *pro tem* retarded
Till someone shows symptoms of making a move.

So ex-heroes, debarred from the theatre of action,
Mope far from the scenes where the battle should be,
Where visiting War Lords express satisfaction
And bugles are blowing for ENSA and tea.
Their rush to the Colours is brusquely arrested
By the widespread display of the War Office sign —
Allied field of glory completely congested,
No vacancies left in the Maginot Line.

LES FLEURS FÉDÉRALES

'Avoid Utopias like the very devil.' — A. D. Lindsay, Master of Balliol, Feb. 17th.

I wandered underneath a cloud
When all at once, through rainbow mists,
I suddenly beheld a crowd,
A flight of Federal Unionists,
Diffusing with the speed of light
The gospel of the word of Streit.

Superior as the stars that shine,
Impartial as the Milky Way,
They conjured up their world design
Remote from conflicts of the day,
Through all their frisking membership
Glad tidings spread from lip to lip.

With sprightly and with sanguine zest
They paddled in the moonshine sea,
One could not help but be depressed
By such a jocund company,
For none beholding would have thought
War to the death was being fought.

And oft, when in the pensive mood
Our plight appears to justify,
That Corybantic multitude
Exacerbates the inward eye,
Trailing their veils of rainbow mists,
A flight of Federal Unionists.

ECHOES SOUND AFAR

[*To the tune of 'Funiculi, Funicula'*]

'Things that are imported from abroad take up shipping space . . . scarce and greatly needed. A home-grown apple is a more patriotic edible than an imported banana.' — Professor Pigou, *The Times*, March 7th.

To aid our war-economy by spending
What should we buy?
Between State opportunities for lending,
We wait reply.
How should we choose among *de luxe* temptations
Both great and small
How clarify commercial complications
Not plain to all?

Listen, listen, echoes sound afar,
Listen, listen, echoes sound afar, tra la la la, etc.

With simple instances our minds can grapple,
Eat what we grow.

We must encourage the domestic apple,
Bananas, no.

Yet if they emanate from some Dominion
Or help a deal,
Are we obliged to seek expert opinion
Before we peel?

Listen, listen, etc.

Some merchandise admittedly exotic
Assists the State,
While other imports are unpatriotic
Because of freight.
Demands for these endanger our position
Our aims impede,
Affording an unhappy exhibition
Of public greed.

Listen, listen, etc.

War-trade in fine cigars and aids to beauty
We should maintain,
And bubbling foreign vintage, nine parts duty,
Such as champagne,
But still there comes to questions of the curious
No answer clear,
If certain goods are to our cause injurious,
Why are they here?

Listen, listen, etc.

THE PEACEMONGERS

'We should let the Western Powers know that Sweden and Norway cannot tolerate their interference. We do not want Finno-Scandia turned into a theatre of war . . . nor have we such faith in their present military possibilities as not to be deterred by the fate of Poland.' — *Svenska Dagbladet*, March 12th (*The Times*, March 13th).

The undefeated flag comes down
Despite the pledge of help Allied,
The nation's doom, who fought alone,
Her neighbours, foes and friends decide.
Free Finland ceases to exist
Because the Swedes are pacifist.

What though she fought the fight of all
And bled for every threatened State?
What though foreshadowed in her fall
They see their own oncoming fate?
Aid in her ordeal they deny,
The Poles were bit, the Swedes are shy.

As France and Britain did in Spain
Their own precarious peace to buy,
So now the Oslo Powers maintain
Their spurious neutrality
To bar the intervening host
Led by the League of Nation's ghost.

They in their generation wise,
With purpose set and vision clear,
Accept all shifts, all compromise,
For help is far and terror near;
And none the other will befriend,
But choose peace to the bitter end.

THE SUITS OF WOE

‘The people of this country are united with sympathy for the situation in which they find themselves, and in admiration for the courage with which they have maintained for so long in the struggle against overwhelming odds. This epic story . . . will remain alive in the memory of all people.’ — Prime Minister on Finland, March 13th.

The hour brings forth the man. This iron time
Which tolls the knell of nation after nation,
Demands, as victims of each murderous crime
Are shuffled off to hasty inhumation,
A master of the simple yet sublime
To standardize the funeral oration,
And in this species of non-stop recital
The world yields Chamberlain unchallenged title.

As to their rest the gashed remains are borne,
Securely nailed inside the flag-draped coffin,
His graveside tributes to all those that mourn
The sharpness of bereavement needs must soften.
The weeds of woe were never better worn —
The trouble is, he wears them much too often
And sometimes spreads consolatory unction
At a not strictly necessary function.

When one in so commanding a position
Shows such obituary eloquence
There comes a moment in the repetition
When there must burst upon the dullest sense
A wild but uncontrollable suspicion
It may not all be pure coincidence,
But Fate mows down these nations small and gallant
To exercise an elegiac talent.

From which there follows, none knows why or how,
Upon these obsequies, the firm conviction
That we should not perpetually endow
This hoary mourner, this confirmed affliction
Whose term of office has been up to now,
Despite his own unjustified prediction
And notwithstanding pacts of mutual amity,
A chronicle of unrelieved calamity.

No man is ever England's Premier named
Without some attribute of highest order,
Then how shall Mr. Chamberlain be famed
By history, time's impartial recorder,
Who for so long memorially framed
His era in a double mourning border?
As stern War Minister? or blest peacemaker?
Or just a universal undertaker?

REVENONS A NOS MOUTONS

'Civilians complain . . . there is too much mutton and too little beef
. . . nearly all is commandeered for the troops. Representations are
being made to the War Office to take a greater proportion of mutton.'
— *Daily Telegraph*, April 1st.

Breathes there the man with soul so dead
Who would not be on mutton fed
To save his own, his native land!
Whose palate shrinks, whose stomach turns,
Who his official ration spurns,
Who asks for beef when beef is banned!

If such there are (and such there be)
Their taste amounts to treachery,
Raw joints thrown back upon the State
Unseasonable glut create.
We grow like that which we devour
And in this world-decisive hour
The roast beef of Old England's might
Befits the soldier's appetite,
Civilians must to mutton keep
Becoming more and more like sheep.

★ ★ ★

Commend O Reith, this prudent course,
The home front from its torpor shake,
The vigour of our rump-fed force
Is worth an age without a steak!

O GOD! O WASHINGTON!

[*After Samuel Butler*]

'The German record . . . makes neutrality not merely difficult for Americans but shameful as well.' — Westbrook Pegler, U.S. columnist.

Far away in the United States of America
The Isolationists bury their heads in the sand, saying:
'The belligerents are six of one and half-a-dozen of the other,
But great is the Monroe Doctrine, rich the blessings of abstract
neutrality,'

O God! O Washington!

Neutral through thick and thin in the old brave battle for freedom
They voted credits to Finland solely for agricultural implements
While trading arms to all comers on a cash-and-carry basis
That they might be without reproach in the sight of the aggressors.

O God! O Washington!

And the voice of reason crieth to the Isolationists, saying:
Ye who prefer the gabble of Goebbels to the gospel of freedom,
When Britain is Hitler's doormat and France Mussolini's cuspidor
Think ye to escape a kick on your large white naked posteriors?
O God! O Washington!

But the voice of reason falleth unheard on the Isolationists' posteriors
The elevation of which blasphemes the principles of democracy.
Geese once saved Rome but the ostriches of the Capitol will not save
America.

O Thomas Jefferson! O Walt Whitman! O Henry James! O President
Roosevelt!
O Washington! O God!

THE LEADER

They prayed for one to guide and lead,
He came at last unheralded
To give his people in their need
Work, peace and bread.

He warmed them at the fires of hate,
He fed them on imagined wrong,
He made the race inviolate,
Feared, safe and strong.

Evil with good he reconciled,
They for his blessings sacrificed
Daughters and sons, the unborn child,
The creed of Christ.

He showed earth's kingdoms spread below,
He scaled the height; they headlong fell
The soul's and body's death to know
And war's unutterable hell.

WHO WILL BE SATISFIED:

If Germany cast out the fiend
And stood upon the angel's side,
From lust of domination weaned,
But still secured in strength and pride,
The English would be satisfied.

If she retired beyond the Rhine,
Which must the Reich from France divide,
(Content her conquests to resign)
And in her bounds in peace to bide,
The French would then be satisfied.

If when the terms of peace are made
America might serve as guide,
Ensuring transatlantic trade
(Free competition not denied),
The States would be quite satisfied.

But if the race we fight to save
Should over victory preside,
If Poland, rising from the grave
Should sit between the Powers allied,
How shall the Poles be satisfied?

For stricken towns and pillaged lands,
For plague and famine far and wide,
For slavery at German hands,
For the red death that Poland died,
How shall the Poles be satisfied?

Till hate itself shall cease to be,
Till German crimes by Poles are tried,
Till there is no more Germany,
Till Poland's blood and tears are dried,
How shall the Poles be satisfied?

A HUMBLE PETITION

'The accounts of the last week (in Norway) show a heavy credit balance to the Allies . . . the victories so far have been local but they have been resounding, continuous, swift. . . .' — *The Times*, April 16th, 1940.

The public we know is an ass
Fit only for general suppression,
Its conduct incredibly crass,
Its chatter one huge indiscretion,
It has just enough wit to perceive
A rather acute contradiction
Between facts it is bound to believe
And the newspapers' rose coloured fiction.

On Monday our forces advance,
On Tuesday the foe has retreated,
On Wednesday, prepared for this chance,
Our fortunate feats are repeated,
On Thursday we strike a hard blow
Our moves are supremely effective,
On Friday, however, the foe
Has somehow attained his objective.

The news for our good is controlled
Though our views are of course not requested,
And nothing whatever is told
Before it has been predigested,
But the experts have never found out
That nothing so daunts and depresses
As the news of an actual rout
After series of bogus successes.

Our leaders we follow and trust,
Our Wellingtons, Nelsons and Chathams,
We are ready to face if we must
Being blown, undefeated, to atoms,
Our morale can withstand every knock
We can meet each demand that arises,
We could only succumb to the shock
Of a series of joyful surprises.

Though for the duration content
Not to ask for the rhyme or the reason,
We this humble petition present
(Though it may be regarded as treason)
To ban as a public abuse
Such boosting, bamboozling and bluffing,
We know we are only a goose
But we beg to dispense with the stuffing.

STAND OF THE OLD BRIGADE

Members in front of him,
Members each side of him,
Members *behind* him
Volley'd and thunder'd.
Why had the Nazis won?
Why were we on the run?
What had been left undone?
What would be left of him
If he had blunder'd?

Stormed at from here and there,
Calmly he said 'Beware
Lest by land, sea and air
All of our forces are
Shatter'd and sunder'd!
Ours not to set the pace,
Ours not to seize a base,
Ours to pursue our course,
Bound for another place
When battle thunder'd
Though the whole Nazi race
Conquer'd and plunder'd.'

Back from the Norway fjord
Stepped the Old Guard aboard,
Safe, while the Commons' horde
Questioned and thunder'd.
No one should lose a seat,
Safe back to Downing Street
He led the Cabinet,
Safe till the next defeat,
While the world wonder'd,
For it had seemed to them
Someone had blunder'd.

'Close up the ranks,' he said,
'Hands off the Old Brigade,
Not to be sunder'd.
Neutrals, be not afraid!
England, be not dismay'd!
No one has blunder'd!

UNDER THE WEATHER 1940

ANTICLIMAX ON THE RUBICON

As far as to the Rubicon
Caesar advances in his stride,
His dauntless legions egg him on,
Fate beckons from the farther side;
Armed at all points for total war
He bivouacs upon the shore.

Long has he stropped the eagles' beaks,
Long blown victorious bugle calls,
His cohorts now for weeks and weeks
Have pasted posters up on walls.
The hour decisive and sublime
Is here — and has been for some time.

Caesar surveys the scheduled leap,
Resolved to gamble — on a cert;
Born for the toga's ampler sweep
Yet loath to lose the Fascist shirt.
Great Caesar of the Fascist brand,
We understand, we understand.

We know why destiny delays
Until Rome's triumph is prepared,
We wait the last dynamic phase,
We see Rome's stainless cleaver bared.
Go, brag before your roaring boys,
The world is weary of your noise.

Rome's pickings may be kept or lost,
Her world-decisive hour has passed,
The Rubicon by others crossed
The fatal die by others cast,
Your lightnings miss, your thunder's jammed —
Cross, Mussolini, and be damned!

GOOD KNIGHTS

O, Cripps is gone eastward and Hoare is gone west,
Their powers as envoys to put to the test,
On business and ambassadorial trips
None smoother than Hoare and none dauntless as Cripps.

Though the matter Sir Stafford is sent to transact
Has nothing to do with the Soviet pact.
When Moscow agrees both to buy and to sell
He may bring up a few other topics as well.
Cripps won't be left standing outside in the hall
By Molotov, Dimitrov, Stalin and all.

Sir Samuel's high mission will doubtless forbid
Finance should be breathed in the ear of Madrid,
But statesmen's discussions though formal in tone
Have sometimes been warmed by the fact of a loan,
And our British grandee we can further commend
Since to Franco he comes as the friend of a friend.

To neutralize neutrals who neutral remain
Is our diplomats' errand to Russia and Spain;
Confusion would be even further increased
Had Cripps been sent westward and Hoare been sent east.
So all parties agree it is much for the best
That Cripps is gone eastward and Hoare is gone west.

TIME AND THE HOUR

'French infantry divisions are more mobile than the German infantry and have a larger proportion of tanks.

'Every day that passes brings us greater strength . . . we can choose our opportunity no matter how long we have to wait.' — *Assurance of Victory* Pamphlet, Ministry of Information.

'This time at least there has been no strategic surprise; the armies of Holland and Belgium and North-Eastern France have been preparing and maturing their plans.' — *The Times* Military Correspondent, May 11th.

Goebbels has told the addled German masses
That England in a trance would soon be thrown.
Goebbels may keep his soporific gases,
We generate sufficient of our own.

Anaesthetized what time the *Blitz* was brewing,
Lest we succumbed to jittery alarms,
We were informed how warplanes were 'accruing',
Till we could boast full parity in arms.

We were advised, lest hearts of oak might flutter,
Time was with the Allies and triumph sure
If we would cheerfully consume less butter,
And wait until the Victory Bonds mature.

We were assured offensives must be static,
It scarcely signified if lines were breached
Since mechanized advance was so erratic
It stopped itself before the goal was reached.

We have been soothed as neutral States went under,
Each conquest shown a death-trap to the foe,
(Though if they make one more strategic blunder
Few experts will be left to tell them so).

Back on our last defences we are driven,
We have been drugged but now our sight is clear;
Time was with us but time will not be given,
We have lost time and now the hour is here.

ERIN GO BLAGH

'I believe this State is in immediate danger of invasion . . . which should be resisted by force.' — J. M. Dillon, Opposition Leader, Dail, June 5th.

'Eire: War strength, including trained reserves, 30,000.' — Strengths and Resources of the Powers. (*News Chronicle Pamphlet*).

It's enough we've heard of Eire and the woes of her,
The old wild tales and the wrongs and the foes of her,
And she harping itself with the smoke of the peat in her eyes,
It's enough we know of the poetry and even the prose of her.

It's plenty we know of the holy soil she has
And the queenly lineage, ancient and royal she has,
And though what they say is absolute Erse to us,
We know of the old wise men in the Dail she has.

And now an invader will threaten maybe, they say,
Her watchers are watching the sky and the sea they say,
Till boats be rising full of Cuchulain's men
And wings be dropping a crowd of the Sidh, they say.

And it's no human help she'll ask on the scene at all
But she'll jab at the strangers that intervene at all.
It's enough of old we have known of the Emerald Isle,
But we never have found her to be so green at all.

For it's well she knows who is plotting a dark design for her,
While she waits till the fairies be coming to hold the line for her,
And it's all my eye and Cathleen ni Houlihan
But may they arrive in time and may it keep fine for her.

INAUGURAL ELEGY

'By arming the people you run risks. Innocent people may be accidentally killed. That doesn't matter if the nation is saved.' —
T. L. Horabin, M.P., *News Chronicle*, June 18th.

The curfew does not knell the parting day,
The lowing herd skedaddle from the lea,
The plowman leaps the stile to get away,
And leaves the village to the L.D.V.

The glimmering landscape hums with hand grenades,
The squire instructs his squad with simple skill,
The busy housewife builds the barricades,
The rude grandfathers of the hamlet drill.

By yonder lych-gate's ivy-mantled arch
The vicar kindles tar and paraffin,
Which, meant to halt the invader's armoured march,
May make one half the county 'next of kin'.

The blunderbus speaks from the twitt'ring clump
And wings the beetle on his wonted flight,
Age gets entangled in the stirrup-pump
And infancy hurls sticks of dynamite.

Far from anticipated zones of strife,
The village that upon itself relies
(With some inevitable loss of life)
Is not, like armies, taken by surprise.

And if some wanderer, innocent of blame,
Receive the passing tribute of a shot
With stern resolve discharged but random aim,
This uncouth rhyme one day will mark the spot.

EPITAPH.

Somewhere beneath this animated scene
There lies a swain who straggled from the road.
Shun, reader, like the plague, the village green
And shelter, trembling, in thine own abode.

SEVEN LITTLE BALKAN BOYS

Seven little Balkan boys did not care to mix,
Musso bagged Albania and then there were six.

Six little Balkan boys a *bloc* could not contrive,
Berlin called up Budapest and then there were five.

Five little Balkan boys, rattled by the war,
Carol asked the Axis and then there were four.

Four little Balkan boys still could not agree,
Turkey kept on falling out and so there were three.

Three little Balkan boys with different points of view,
Sofia rang up Stalin and then there were two.

Two little Balkan boys without a place to run,
Ciano called at Belgrade and then there was one.

One little Balkan boy stranded all alone,
One little Hellene can do nothing on his own.

Seven little Balkan boys had places in the sun,
The Balkans they were many, but the Greater Reich is one.

ALL GAUL IS DIVIDED INTO THREE PARTS

The French who did not wish to fight
Were the ultra Left and the Fascist Right;
The Centre managed a *coup de main*
And France is hoist with her own Pétain.

ALL QUIET

[June 23rd, 1940]

We can take down the map of the war
With the sweep of the Maginot Line
Broad and strong from the sea to the Rhine,
And the cities, the rivers, the forts.
There is no Western Front any more,
The Line was a sham after all.
We shall hear no more 'latest reports'
We can take down the map from the wall.

These cities have gone up in flames,
These cornlands and vineyards are lost,
The Marne and the Seine have have been crossed,
There is nothing left now but the names,
The rivers are full of the dead.
It was here the tanks broke through the Gap,
Here they stood, here they fell, here they fled.
It is done. We can take down the map.

The battle is suddenly still,
The life is gone out of the land,
Consigned to the enemy's hand,
Betrayed and surrendered and sold
To be tamed to the conqueror's will.
Now silence and terror descend,
Our friend and our comrade of old
Will not be at our side to the end.

We can take down the map of the war,
From the Rhône and the Rhine to the sea
All's quiet as the grave; there will be
No counter-attack or advance.
The flag is defiled that she bore
And the sword of her forging is blunt.
So peace has been given to France,
All's quiet on the Western Front.

JOHN ANDERSON, MY JO!

Addressed by the Minister of Information to the Home Secretary.

John Anderson, my jo, John,
Syne we were first put in,
We twa hae sat on England's heid
To gie't the will to win;
You dae it wi' yon Special Powers
That ilka morn will grow,
I dae't wi' my wee broadcast hours,
John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John,
Lang may we pu' thegither
To serve our dauntless countrymen
And gag their waefu' blather,
'T is they maun pay the piper, John,
'T is we maun ca' the tune,
I mayna' raise their spirits up —
You keep their girning doon.

John Anderson, my jo, John,
Your ways are dour and rough,
You dae't wi' pains and penalties,
I dae it wi' a duff;¹
But blessings on your heavy paw
When winds o' rumour blow,
We'll hang thegither to the end,
John Anderson, my jo.

¹ Duff: a blow with a soft substance. (*Chambers's Scots Dialect Dictionary.*)

DEAD DAFFODILS

[*After Robert Herrick*]

'Mr. Churchill is the leader of the nation; his late opponents survive only under the shadow of his wing.' — Lady Violet Bonham Carter, *John o' London's Weekly*, Aug. 9th.

Dead daffodils, we weep to see
You hang about so late,
The rising sun with radiance strong
Reveals your shrivelled state.
Go, go,
You make a dismal show,
So long
You have outstayed your hour;
No daffodil can hope to be
An everlasting flower.

Since you, alas, were bedded in
All things have gone amiss
You cannot endlessly proceed
Through metamorphosis,
Some waste
Twice used, may in the trough be placed
For feed,
But having bloomed in vain,
You are but destined for the bin
Ne'er to be salved again.

MINISTRY MYSTERY

'49 persons in the Ministry of Information receive salaries of £1,000 a year, and over.' —*Hansard*, Aug. 7th.

Though national safety must comment disarm
It may never be perfectly clear
Why some get a fortnight for spreading alarm
While some get a thousand a year.

NOTHING ALIEN IS HUMAN

'Soon, very soon, the sun will rise again and shine . . . we shall call at the chosen moment to all whom Hitler enslaved and tortured to rise.' — Dr. Hugh Dalton, Broadcast, Aug. 11th.

When Ministers prophetically call
To friendly aliens conquered and oppressed,
Their orotund asseverations fall
A trifle flat, it has to be confessed,
While they, proclaiming liberty for all,
The champions of liberty arrest;
And even to the friendliest alien ear
Their words sound relatively insincere.

The friendly alien fails to understand
Why, when enslaved, we name them our allies,
Their kindred in our own crusading land
We class as suspects, saboteurs and spies;
So when at our benevolent command
The sun of freedom once again shall rise
They may not credit the phenomenon
But ask whose side it will be shining on.

When we intern the friends of liberty
We cancel Ministerial eloquence,
When we deport the alien refugee
We shake the friendly alien's confidence,
Until between us and the enemy
They find in fact so little difference
That when we sound the hour of their release
They may be reconciled to Nazi peace.

Though with the tongue of angels and of men
Our cause to liberty we dedicate,
Till England to herself is true again
And those unjustly held we liberate,
So long as to the friendly alien
Fear and mistrust our policy dictate,
It seems, at least to aliens, a mistake
To say that Britain fights for freedom's sake.

I WILL ARISE

[*After W. B. Yeats*]

I will arise and go now, and seek a Ministry,
And a deep shelter find there of ferro-concrete made,
The Departmental personnel will all make room for me,
And I shall sleep through the b—— loud raid.

Yes, I shall wait for peace there, for peace keeps stopping short,
Stopping for the wail of warning that noon and darkness brings;
Here midnight's all a-jitter with the A.A. guns' report
And evening full of the Luftwaffe's wings.

I will arise and go now, for wandering astray
I hear from Whitehall's refuges that long untroubled snore;
As I duck in surface shelters the Blitz can blast away,
I hear it in the deep earth's core.

