

Poetry of life

Book 1

To Beryl who inspired all

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Croce é delizia

When chasing life's elusive bliss
With all its lights and all its glitz,
We might do well to ponder this:

The measure of encountered pain
Helps predefine the joy we gain;
The greater our progress is fraught
To that extent is pleasure bought.

Thus, quench'd thirst imparts a taste
To water, as if nectar laced
And humble bread is choice repast
When sating hunger swelled by fast.

Fatigue from toil rewards the spent
With paradise by slumber lent;
And *Disco-din's* discordant dance
Doth silence all the more enhance.

Commitment to the heart's true bent
Delights us 'pon accomplishment
For personal satisfaction's ranked
Against unstinting efforts banked.

When dearest treasure's been misplaced
Which prayers to St A. haven't traced,
That consequential anxious state
Turns joyous on discovery late.

As limbs get sullied doing time
Moist pores stopped up with dust and grime;
The thickness of the dirt will say
What ecstasy when bathed away.

Proportional to prior distress
Is consequential happiness.
The Lord will surely not disdain
A life that's been fulfilled thro' pain.

So, life's travails we'd best embrace
For these assist our call to grace -
Embrace the ugly, spurn the pain,
Snub the sunshine, welcome rain!

AN ANNIVERSARY VERSARY

*When I was an infant my mum said to me,
"Don't tie yourself down, you're best off fancy free"
So I fought off the girls
(Who were thrilled by my curls)
And instead took to woodwork to keep company.*

*When I was a schoolboy I said to my chums
The girl that I marry must be good at sums
She'll add to a "T"
And subtract easily,
Multiply and divide - so that she can show me.*

*While still very young I was told by my pals
If you value your freedom, don't mess with the gals
On the occasional night
You get out for a pint
You'll be sent up the road if you stagger home tight.*

*And then I met Beryl, she seemed rather nice,
So when mother said no, I declined her advice.
When propositioned she said
We could happily wed
But her lecherous intent was to get me in bed.*

*Now, when I got married t'was averred by my spouse
If you play your cards right and don't act like a louse
Get me breakfast each day
And we'll get on OK
I might ev'n get to love you (but never obey)
Just do as you're told or get out of the house.*

*I've giv'n it a go, I've never said no,
Now a wife and two kids is all I've to show.
After 25 years I'm the family's mainstay;
And thus to my siblings you might hear me say
If you have any sense you'll get married today!*

*You asked me to help you get through your exam
But it's perfectly clear you're brighter'n I am
I'm entirely unable
To do my times table
(fortunately I can rely upon you to remember to
bring money when we go to the pub...)*

The Birth

*A pinch of hair, a squash of head
And suddenly my world stopped dead.*

*Neat hands and feet, and eyes to see,
One finely crafted Lilliput me;*

*Tiny, fresh and undefiled,
My twin before I was a child.*

MATURE LOVE

Golden grace now fills the space
That passion red once visited

The joys we share give us love to keep
And tribulation helps it grow deep

Smiles

After walking ~~ten~~ two miles

Over dozens of stiles

A few pints of The Best

Transforms frowns into smiles.

Gentlemen

No more the English gentleman is weaned in our fair land.

With "equal pay" and "equal say" (I know you'll understand);

In the souls of Asia's kinsmen the traditions never ceased.

The art of English Gentleness has passed from West to East.

Christmas card verse to my beloved

The chilly winter frosts are
honey-blossom laced
By your eternal sunshine
with which my life is graced.

Anniversary card

When you're sure your future days
Are care and loving laced,
Life's troubling perversities
Are in perspective placed.

Indulgence

*Good heart we obtain
From challenging pain -
And the tougher the test,
So much greater the gain.*

UNREACHED POTENTIAL

Each man is a meld
Of promise out held
But when put to the test
Few match up to the best

ACTION MAN

When the stomach needs food
Then swallow don't chew
He who pauses to brood
Will never, ever, do

Of Seasoned Wedlock

1996, with fondest love from your husband of 25 years

*To Alerman's dark curfew has succumbed to shining spring
And blossom-gravid fruiting buds of life rekindled sing.
Now pastoral lanes and byways we strolled down like queen and king
(Who could have thought such rambles would our paths together bring?)
Then blessed intervention roused our wedding bells to ring.*

*That fount of social balm that we've been restive for is here
He's warmed our pocket plots and nudged her life back into gear!
Our living space extends to let the green outdoors come near,
We'll share alfresco suppers that we've waited for all year,
Each caring for the other sealed our bond of love my dear.*

*The long warm days of sunshine bid scones and cream for tea,
Perhaps we'll meet with neighbours and arrange a small soiree.
Then an asinine assertion draws some grouchy repartee,
Yes we have our differences, but that's our strength d'you see:
The parson's counsel spurs us, " Goodwill fosters constancy".*

*Luminescent emerald fades to depleted gold;
As the cool thief of fruitfulness contemptuously takes hold
And wilful frosty fingers wrap his booty in white mould.
Some seasonable respite while Christ's story is retold,
And mutual reassurance keeps our hearts from feeling cold.*

*Thus the years unfold themselves and Time reveals his store.
The blessing of our coupling, after five years and a score,
Is the sun of love between us, quietly blazing all the more.
And the warmth from this eternal summer will ensure
That when celebrations end, our universe remains secure.*

A Cryptic Condition

The potter erred before he threw
And hence I turned a whit askew.
I'm not misshapen 'round my rim
And, thankfully, I'm sound of limb,
But gremlins mischievously fixed
The rec'ipe when my clay was mixed
To switch phonemes, like 'pee' and 'bee'
And bind with waters of Lethe.

As Divers Tongues to doubters sound,
Or chatter, when the voice is drowned,
Talk stitched to noise I can't unpick,
(God once smote Babel such a trick)
My pupils wax like rippled glass
While Broca grapples words to parse.
School-branded 'deaf', I tiptoed 'round
Interred in my uncommon ground.

Although my brain can soak up facts
My cranium leaks through fickle cracks
To sabotage my memory.
When conversation turns to me,
The tongue-tip nouns that should emerge
Stay strangely mute, right on the verge;
And finally, to cap it all,
My quill is spoilt by childish scrawl!

Yet these mere tics my powers transcend
My lobes are knapped to make and mend.
With boffin brains and handy hands
(A nerd that no one understands)
I might have fledged like King Brunel!
Instead, outcast in private hell
Bare living skills were all I learned
By rote, or getting fingers burned.

In time a coping game plan grew
That helped my struggle to construe
And life was managed with a grin
So none would guess the mix within.
'Though Wechsler ranked me rather bright
My tutors failed to see the light;
It was my sweetheart named the key
To solve the puzzle that was me.

Her gifted insights grasped the clue
Beneath the guise of ease I grew.
My difference, well hid away,
In forty years and six delay,
Had overwhelmed the Star within
Which she perceived beneath the skin.
Assessment of my struggle, broke
The dread that held me in its yoke.

Then, guided by that venerable sage
Who counselled from another age,
With sightless eye I groped inside
Peeled layers back and kindled pride
To shed the clay's myopia
And bare life's cornucopia...
Wherefore, in print, you read my tale -
In all its tedious detail.

The cup of chance we're passed at birth
Is bent and curled within our girth;
Although our lives are filled by us
Our vessels shape their contents thus.
We challenge our predestined lot
By stretching deep inside the pot,
For 'though the potter shapes the clay
It's not his hand that guides our way.

With acknowledgement to Fitzgerald

Au Contrare

A vagrant there
The worse for wear
With matted hair
And coat threadbare
Plus many a tear:

"Could you spare
A penny fare?"

His pleading stare
And manners rare
Aim to ensnare
The toughest bear.
But I'll prepare

To spurn his glare –
I'm lothe to share
What I can't spare
So I declare -
"I'll say a prayer!"

Now greying hair
And waning flair
Mark time's measure.
Yes, m'eau is fair
In need of care -
The circle's square!
So let's beware
The selfish snare
For coins are ne'er
Route du Bonheur.

Happy 50th Birthday

*Six hundred months is scant device
(Six hundred years would scarce suffice)
To praise thy sweetly leavened spice.*

*Yet humble quill begs to rehearse
Within the scope of common verse
This tribute to thy gifts diverse.*

*Impoverished by the means at hand
But pounding with emotion fanned
Few lines speak volumes of time's sand.*

*Each sixth of April past and hence
Adds to thy lovely countenance
A complement of distilled sense*

*As years grant wisdom, harmony
Completes thy graceful symmetry
To charm, beloved, doubly.*

*As rose betokens love's charged scent
And music is its nourishment,
You are my love's embodiment.*

*To Beryl with fondest love,
from Joe 6 April 1997*

Incontinence

Sorry? My dearest heart;
When a flea frees a fart
Do the seas roll back?
Do the stars turn black?
Does the hot sun crack?
Does the sharp wind slack?
Nor is my love shaken
By your indiscretion.

After 11:22pm on 30th June, 2002

Afterlife

“No heavenly tryst beyond!” I scoffed,
Once, when I heard you praying aloft.
“No exposé at Peter’s gate!”
“No virgins, seventy, lying in wait!”

Alas, one short-sleeve summer day,
Incurable, you passed away.
Next day the world’s dry eye dawned bright
While I was left bereft of light.

Now, life I’ll willingly let go
Since Fate unravelled me to show
How wondrously re-joined we’ll be
When Time scythes me, as ‘C’ did thee.

Where is Thy Power?

'Forever' the Word we have solemnly spoken,
A vow that can never be literally broken
In spite of the Lord's premature intervention;
For over our words death has no jurisdiction.

A Full Life

I saw my daughters born
And watched them thrive;
I tended to my love
Through her demise.

1+1

One and one make two,
Two betrothed, duo;
Duo sans one = none.

Sonnets

The Amputee

These merchant hours, which petty function fills
Help swamp the dragon my verse crudely quills.
Your radiance has slipped my gentle tether,
To mock our vow of constancy forever;
But inward eye will not be gladly fleeced
Our timeless sun of love has n'er decreased.
In fancy flight I lure you from your rest
And raise you up, unbounded and flawless.

At once is winter's chill made blossom laced,
My stumphen life with instant summer graced;
In wreaths of spangled stars you're manifest
To let me glimpse again your image blest.

Like phantom pain from excised vital limb
Love's synapse aches to scorn The Reaper's whim.

The End of the Tunnel

Wherefore the afterlife for which men lust;
The guts and brains of cadavers turn dust.
Belief will not restore your mirthless heart
And energise its tenderness to start.
No magic can repair your witless brain
To vivify your spirit once again,
Nor deity re-light your vacant eyes
No matter what glib 'miracle' He tries.
God's pious sheep, his bounteousness refused,
Let will and reason atrophy, unused;
Now, aided by their Faith, they tryst in hymns
While I brook Phases as your aura dims.
But past crude nous, a glimmer beckons me;
Soon I'll embrace Time's scythe to follow thee.

At Rest

Scatter me not over hallowed ground
Where fescue grows thick and no one comes 'round.
Nor on turf of the chase, realm of the hound,
Nor on bleak moorland, nor in stagnant sound.
Not a cave in the Gorge miles under the ground,
Nor on top of a peak where I'll never be found.
Nor think you I'll rest on the rolling downs
With frost chill'd hollows and touristy towns.
But scatter me please o'er the waters that rise
At Trewsbury Mead under sapphire skies
And roll down thro' Remenham to St Nicholas' path
Where my love and I wended to chatter and laugh
And here we will float in perpetual grace
Each rapt in the other's dust-spangled embrace.

The Dullahan (Headless Coachman)

We vassals of time have a measured score
And the Banshee wails, when we're 'counted for,
To Her Headless Coachman and his team of four
Black stallions with head plumes, in deference to lore.

They ride on the wind from out of the night,
A fiendish dark turnout, as these lines recite.
As they break into gallop the traces draw tight,
The beasts' nostrils flare and their eyes glisten white.

*“The blustering wind, or a carriage in flight
With coach wheels a'rumbling?”* ‘though still out of sight,
It sounds closer each hearing, as thunderclaps might,
To demand the one doomed – a macabre Invite.

One wild night you'll harken her wailing once more;
You'll feel the hooves thunder, you'll hear the hearse draw
And the windows will shake with a rap at your door:
That's the call of the Dullahan, that none can ignore.

Inspired by Irish folklore

My Garden (Started life as a love poem, see page 12)

*Earth's dark hibernal curfew succumbs to vibrant spring
And blossom-gravid fruiting buds of life rekindled sing.
Now, Common Sturnus sorties out for mayflies on the wing
And grubs, his greedy starlets have demanded him to bring.*

*That fount of social balm that we've been restive for is here,
He's warmed our pocket plot and nudged her life back into gear.
Our living space extends to let this joie de vivre come near;
And, sweet pea, rose and dahlia miraculously appear.*

*We've watched the seed unfurl and swell, now God unveils his store:
Cos leaves, Savoys, Olympians, Valencias by the score
And canes borne down with lusciousness, red, gold and black galore.
Then, fiery Stag Horn Sumac shows to prolong the décor!*

*Luminescent emerald fades to depleted gold
As the cool thief of fruitfulness contemptuously takes hold
And wilful frosty fingers wrap his booty in white mould.
Now, plucky Winter Pansies melt my eyes and scorn the cold.*

*Thus the seasons spend themselves, while Time keeps silent score.
Throughout our humble garden, with its year split into four,
Earth flaunts her wondrous cycle to inspire us ever more
With the miracle of life, enacted right outside our door.*

