

A Short Medley

- First Steps
- There's Nowt on our Herm
- At the Frankfurt Book Fair
- I can take it
- Me and My Shrink
- Algebra
- Roach Motel
- Why Fat Cats So Often Purr
- Down the Red Carpet
- The Plucky Duck
- To Lady and the Dog Star
- Crazy Mixed-Up He-Goat
- Elegy on lacking Inspiration
- Can Love Die?
- My Drug-Store Muse
- Behind Poets* Corner
- Mike Malloy's Maximum Cover
- To Conquer and Be Loved
- Transmuting Gold

By John Scutts

1. FIRST STEPS

"The moon have eyes,"
my daughter said,
as we walked down the street
one night.

"The moon HAS eyes,"
I said to her.

"Yes, the moon have eyes,
that's right!"

2. THERE'S NOWT* ON OUR HERM

There's a naked heathen godlet
that lodges in our hall;
one leg of his is cocked up in the air.
Does that finger pointing upwards,
on which we hang the keys,
import some noble thought, some lofty theme?
If not, one asks, how should it be construed?
Maybe it's just another case
when all that can be said is.
'If it weren't for art,
you'd call the thing damn rude.'
Then he wears a warden's helmet,
except that it's got wings
and wings he's got a-flapping at the heel.
Considering aeronautics,
I doubt he'd pass the test,
but there's a thought that never bothers Herm.
He bears a funny wand
round which snakes entwine their coils
in a way that real snakes never seem to do.
Don't ask me why they're there,
or why he walks on air.
He's a god, yes, he's a god,
and there's an end.

*nowt - nothing (in northern English regional speech)

3. At the Frankfurt Book Fair

I went to the Frankfurt Book Fair the other day.
It was mind-boggling..
Books! There were fat books, thin books,
White books, black books, tawny books,
Paperbacks, hardbacks, beautifully bound books,
Pure books, lax books, learned books, lay books,
Plain books, books of many colours,
Books on every subject under the sun,
Not to mention other books on
Distant galaxies, pulsars, quasars, black holes,
Books on any theme you can think of,
Or on themes you can't even pronounce, from:
Art to Arthropods,
Bees to Biochemistry,
Cats to Catastrophes
Drugs to Decadence,
Energy to Ergonomics,
French Cooking to Frescos,
Guns to Gout,
History to Hippopotami,
Internal Medicine to Icebergs,
Julius Caesar to Justification,
Kulturkampf to Kinetics
Lace to Logogriphs,
Man to Manchuria,
Nietzsche to Nonsense Rhymes,
Opera to Ophthalmoscopes,
Poodles to Pollution,
Quantum Mechanics to Queen Victoria,
Russell to Rabbits,
Shaw to Shingles,
Tao to Torts,
Urdu to Ultimatums,
Virgil to Vivisection,
Whales to Witchcraft,
X-rays to Xylographs,
Yoga to Youth Hostels,
Zen to Zola, ..

By closing-time my legs were giving out.
A voice, it seemed, was saying:
"Of more than is taught by these, my son, take care.
Of making many books there is no end,
And much study is weariness f the flesh."
I don't know about making them, I thought,
As I commenced my get-away from the Penguin stand,
But it takes something of an athlete just to glance at them.
On reaching the gates I felt crushed,
First by the crowds, and second,
Under the sheer weight of unfathomable ignorance.

4. . I CAN TAKE IT

Pleased to meet you. How do you do
I'm your friendly neighbourhood guru
.My words are pure and gentle,
My creed most transcendental.
I free both men and women
From western materialism,
From anxieties and care,
And every evil snare.

To accumulate great wealth
 Is injurious to one's health.
 In luxury you dine,
 But some dirty rotten swine,
 To your utmost dismay.
 Has taken the silver away.
 As I have the rare capacity
 To transcend such wicked rapacity,
 Free your soul from material tangles,
 Let me contend with your bangles.
 Beware lest a slight hesitation
 Stand between you and sublime meditation.

5. ME AND MY SHRINK

My shrink is in a state of deep depression
 And I'm largely to blame.
 He cured me of all my neuroses,
 anxiety states,
 an inferiority complex,
 etc.,
 so successfully
 that I no longer worry
 about the bills
 he keeps sending me.
 I wish I was worried

6. THE ALGEBRA OF HISTORY AND BUNK

A. History is bunk.
 B. Who said?
 A. Henry Ford said.
 B. Who's that?
 A. He's dead.
 B. Who was that?
 A. He was the founder of a major automobile company.
 B. When did he found it?
 A. Er, er.....
 B. Go on.
 A. Actually, I can't quite remember the date.
 B. Why not?
 A. Well, my history isn't that bright.
 B. I thought you said "History..."
 A. "is bunk." I did, but.. er
 B. So history is bunk, right?
 A: Right.
 B: Henry Ford and his statement are part of history, right.
 A. Right.
 B. If history = bunk
 B. And Henry Ford's statement = part of history
 B. Then Henry Ford's statement = bunk.
 B. Corollary? History not = bunk. Q.E.D.
 B. Right?
 A. Like, two bunks cancel each other out?
 B. Right.
 7. THE ROACH MOTEL
 There is a town in Austin they call "the Roach Motel," for many a poor roach that entered there a sticky fate befell. Now roaches, you keep our of there whatever may entice, for any roach may enter once, but never enter twice. My father as a crawler, who crawled from dive to dive, but he steered clear of roach motels, and therefore did survive. Guests of the roach motel, I vouch, roach mother, tell your son, need no long-term pension plan. Alas, I know, I am one

8. WHY FAT CATS SO OFTEN PURR

THE VERSIFIER'S CURSE

Constrained by rhymes,
 the writer of verse my well err
 from the straight path like a hiker

to whose clothes things cling as does a bur,
like a tramp at whose heels
there slinks a dog that stinks.
From this well-thumbed rhyming dictionary,
you may infer
that inspiration needs the occasional prod.
How odd! Even to those who claim her as a friend
the Muse of poetry and verse sometimes has lips
as open as a miser`s purse.

O, say, in Heaven`s name, what gain
has even lain in the fact that the verb "to blur"
rhymes with a noun like "myrrh"?

Just for the merriment
try this experiment.
Say to the first person you meet on a bus.
"Hi there, Sir!" (or maybe "Ma`am!),
"Say, I pray, why fat cats so often purr."
Try this out, and you`ll aver
that while sense and rhyme sometimes concur,
it is not invariably the case,
and world the world not be a duller place,
if - perish the thought - it were?

9Â . DOWN THE RED CARPET

Taking great pains to keep his claws from sight,
He pussyfoots down the carpet plush and red,
At the end of which a fox with outstretched paw now waits.
He delivers a carefully worded speech
With a distinctly Macavertellian turn of phrase,
And purrs imperturbably of peace.
Wincing painfully at the very mention of that word,
He promises further measures to combat
The growing menace of terrorism,
That obscene form of violence
Not clad in the cloth of state.
Yet do we not discern a wistful,
Almost nostalgic, far-off look,
While he pauses between the paragraphs,
As he thinks back to those heady halcyon days,
When he, in those wild-cat days of yesteryear,
Ordered the deaths of innocent civilians
And planted bombs to maim and kill.
His means justified their ends.
He receives an thunderous ovation,
And there are tears in many eyes,
Most noticeably among the crocodiles.

10Â . The Plucky Duck

I begin my tale about a duck
That had the nerve, the verve and the pluck
To leave the farm on a stormy night.
All went well till it ran out of luck
When crossing paths with a farmer`s truck.

What a sad end to the life of a duck!

They said a funny Latin word,
they said that you were dead,
yet merrily you wagged your tail
when I took you to the vet.

You were not kind to chickens,
as well the neighbours know,
or come to that, to ducks and geese,
and yet I loved you so.

Oh to recall the bygone days
we roamed and roved together,
sometimes when snow lay all about,
sometimes on purple heather.

Our walkies to the liquor store,
our excursions to the bar,
and all those times you led me home
when I couldn't use the car.

At night, I swear, an angel
looms in the purple sky,
and on a gently twinkling leash
you, Lady, romp on high.

12. Elegy on Lacking Inspiration I don't feel much like writing this poem, for there's nothing that much on my mind. No birds are a-tweeting, no cattle are lowing, or maybe my perceptions are blind. For want of an alternative merit, I find now is the right time to stop. If a poem won't work, then end it to limit the scope of the rot.

13. CONFESSIONS OF A CRAZY DISORIENTED ELDERLY HE-GOAT

I am in part a Protestant,
In part I am a Jew,
But then I am a Catholic,
on off-days an atheist, too.

I'm something of a socialist
and pay my union dues
from well-laundered Mafia funds.
Psst! Have you got your share, too?

If they'd put me down in Ulster,
I'd have blown my brains out with a gun,
Just to keep 'em guessing
Which faction in me won.

You can call me all the names you like.
A Prot, a wop, a yid.
In earlier days I used to be
a crazy mixed-up kid.
And I sure still am baffled
by this crazy mixed-up world,
and don't expect enlightenment
ere my winding sheet is furled.

But there's just one thing I'd like to know
Before the day I die.
Which part of me is all the rest,
And which part of me is I? 14. What killed our love? Nought killed our love.

For Love, how can it die?

But the flourishing of Love?

Oh, that may seem to pass.

Ask Dido, ask Romeo, ask me.

Thwart Love, let's try to

bury Love and seal its tomb,

but it must surely rise again

and then pursue us day by day,

and haunt us night by night.

Forget Love, try, but know

it will invade our innermost recess

and in the Spirit's catacombs

celebrate, though darkness reign,

what Reason's light betrayed.

15. MY DRUG-STORE MUSE

Her eyes of heaven's blue distilled,

her charcoal hair,

I looked at her and sensed

a poem's genesis.

Immaculate in snow-white coat,

she is the star I hail,

my guide through seven seas.

16, BEHIND POETS' CORNER
 Communication's Spiritual Dimension: "What hath God wrought, "the wording of the first telegraph message, which was transmitted by Samuel Morse on May 24th 1844 from Baltimore MA to Washington, D.C. Westminster Abbey! O traveler say, where else but in the confines of this hallowed place does so much greatness (admired with mediocrity no doubt) with such greatness vie? Eyes flit from plaque to bust, from urn to marble grandiosity: a hero here, a great reformer there, and just beyond some statesman of renown or, perhaps, just one whose name means nothing now save to a delving archivist. Was he a Tory, he a Whig, he a Conservative or Labour peer? At last they rest in harmony of sorts from all the uproar and hoarse debate heard long years past in the halls across the way. Even poets have their corner too, behind which, the guidebooks say, the first publisher of England once set up his press. Through that was centuries ago, let us by imagination still hear its clattering above the chattering of those whose eyes were closed to all things new: "It be the Devil taught 'im! How else could one man, one man I say, make as many books in one day as might an honest scribe in the space of one full year?" said Brother Stephen, a scribe himself. "His craft spells the end of the time-honoured art of embellishing the scrolls and pages of Holy Law." "I knew him in years gone by, when he, a mercer in Flemish cloth, traded with my father" said a woman with wrinkled brow. "But for his love of treasure and fame, he would be now my children's sire. He sold his soul, believe me." "What if Wycliff, what if John Hushad had the use of it" asked a friar in black: "The world today would be a sea of heresy. Aye, 'tis not of God, this thing!" "On good authority I have it," said another, "that he is a bosom-friend of Mistress Shore, the strumpet that skirts a sea of unfathomed depravity, the witch whose sorceries enthral Edward, our once noble king. Further, he consorts with those in high places who, like that wastrel John Oldcastle in noble Harry's reign, have conspired against the throne and Holy Church!" And yet the Abbot, grave and wise, beheld the scene with other eyes. What of such taunts? A man in whom both faith and reason, shared one home, like one master's cat and dog, well knew it was not the Devil but one Ulrich Zell of Cologne, where the wise Men's relics lie, that had been Caxton's teacher, and he in turn had learnt the art from John Gutenberg of Mainz. "Printing - a power for evil only, why not also good?" the Abbot thought, "I plead the parable of the wheat and tares. As to the art of embellishment, yes, there's sharpness in that point, but where is gain that never brings some loss? Was Holy Writ given us to be gilded with embellishments? A scholar newly fled from Constantinople, brought me an ancient book containing the writings of Philo, the learned Jew of Alexandria, in which the words: "With finger of

flame on tablet hewn from rock did the Lord inscribe the Law: Where are they now, those tables of cold stone?" Philo inquired, "but lost in the night of long-passed time. Yet not the fire divine that daily lights our hearts, our souls and minds." "What is Pentecost?" the Abbot thought, "if not in Christian terms the ancient Jewish festival of Weeks, commemorating the giving of the Law fifty days after the Passover Feast? For the Alexandrian sage, this festival served to recall both the institution of the written Law, and the giving Spirit, free as fire and air, ever-present even to the farthest corner of the earth." If he had expressed himself in modern terms, the Abbot might have said that communication, the diffusion of knowledge and ideas and inspiration were all facets of the self-same stone. "Printing - a thing inspired?" the Abbot mused, his nimble eyes skipping from row to row of stained metallic lines. The wonder of it lay, he thought, not in any weird magic inhering in the art, not in the revelation of some supernatural law, but rather in the singular fact that an idea essentially so simple had not been seized on long before. If inspiration takes many forms, might it not also follow the salving of blind eyes, the lifting of a veil? Ah! Caxton's press is silent now like those poets lying there. Oh that living poets and living publishers had so close, so peaceable a relationship. MIKE MALLOY'S MAXIMUM COVER For version on BFBS Radio http://www.julian-scutts.de/mambo/index.php?option=com_remository&Itemid=42&func=fileinfo&filecatid=13&parent=category Have you heard the tale of

the man no poison could destroy?

Well, harkee folks and lend an ear

as y' carry on knittin' or drinkin' beer.

Born long ago in Donegal,

And blessed from birth with a stomach of iron,

he heard America's westward call,

in the depths of the Bronx his body's a-lyin'

Boozin' the hard stuff became his life's one great mission,

and I guess his life's greatest trial was the Great Prohibition.

The day finally came when he hadn't a dime,

so he decided to have himself one last great helluva time,

He knocked on the door of this speak-easy dive

where there was plenty of water to keep fish alive.

"Say the password, bud," said a guy at the door.

Mike's bleary eyes glowed with alcoholic intent:

"Hit the trail," said the guy, but just then he saw

Mike's rubicund nose - and had to relent.

"You'd better see Lu," said a guy with a gun,

whose menacin' looks promised no fun.

Lu smirked, then spat, and all he would say

was: "The guy needs a break, I guess he's okay."

"Your poison?" said the bartender with a sinister leer,

"It's all on the house, so make it stronger than beer!"

"Could Oy have sum of tat?" the Irishman asked,

pointing his finger at a bottle of bourbon

Its label had on it a dervish with his face masked
beneath a lurid fire-red turban.

"I can see at a glance," the bartender remarked,

"You sure are a man of impeccable taste," then a guy behind barked:

"Cut out the fancy talk, Joe, I got business to do.

Say, Mister, it ain't often we have a gentleman like you

grace this joint with his honourable person.

Say, you fellas back there, we've got us a guest, so quit cursin'!

I think it's high time we was introduced. Tony Marino's the name.

Meet my friends - Dan and Frank, quit that damn-fool game,

come and meet ... Pardon me, Mr. ... er?" - "Malloy's me name, Mike Malloy."

"Well, Mike, I'd like y' to meet Joe Murphy - wanna be on the right side

of dat boy. See, he serves the juice and kinda plays the part of Mother,

Say, Joe, your dad came from Ireland too, and Mike sure looks mighty like your ma's kid brother.

Yeah! Her maiden name was Malloy, small world, is it not?

You two must be related! Now Joe's got a very soft spot

for Irish relations, and you'll be interested to know he can be mighty generous with the credit.

Joe was a chemist once, which is useful. They call it illicit, Joe just distils it.

Meet Francis Pasqua, an undertaker by profession,

That's the line that ain't been too badly affected by the economic depression.

Now Dan over there sells fruit and vegetables on a stall down at the dock.

That's why the burgundy's from tomatoes, and there's squash in the hock.

Frank Manzella - Hi Frank! - is a doctor, which helps, and you see that guy in the chair pickin' his teeth, kinda tall and bony,

He's involved in - er - the disposal business, and most people round these parts just call him tough Tony Bastone.

Now, Mike, you certainly strike me as the responsible, level-headed type, and I'd bet my bottom dollar I could do you a big favor.

As an insurance broker with wide experience, I'd say the time's ripe for you to give yourself maximum cover. Frank, stop coughin' and pass over the liquor with the soy bean flavor!"

Now, Tony was the kinda operator that never slackened his pace

When he'd got business to transact. From a smart leather attache case

he produced a bewildering array of booklets and papers.

Joe passed a bottle under Mike's nose so's he'd inhale its strong vapors.

"Now Mike, I'd like a few details please: When and where were you born?"

"Oy tink it was Donegal Ireland, Oy disremember the rest, but oy coulda sworn
Oy had me sixtieth birthday a few years back." Makin' allowances for wear and tear.
Tony assessed Mike's age as bein' fifty-four, takin' good care
not to stretch credibility beyond the point it could bear.
As to Mike's occupation, there was a slight problem to overcome,
Since, precisely defined, it would have been professional bum,
but since Mike had once served customers in a store,
Tony thought 'store manager' would settle the score.
Mike was single, so somebody would be needed to put in
A claim, should anything happen to Mike, whose next of kin
turned out to be - surprise, surprise - bartender Joe. Thus it transpired
that he would be the principal beneficiary on the day Mike expired.
An eight hundred dollar policy was obtained from Metropolitan Life Inc.,
Two more from the Prudential, each for about five hundred, I think.
Tony also interested Mike in a six grand double indemnity clause
against death by accident, with a concessionary premium for guys workin' in stores.
"But how shall Oy manage me monthly payment?" asked worried Mike as he was about to sign.
Tony, replenishin' Mike's glass, said: "Till you've found your feet, Mike, that worry's mine."
"But Oy tought insurance was for fellas wid ten kids to support."
said Mike, "Not for drunken bachelors like me." - "Wrong!" came Joe's retort.
"If anything should happen to you as a result of an accident, now with a double indemnity clause,
I'll make dead sure the six grand paid out will go to a very charitable cause.
See, this kid brother of mine's a priest, who runs this old people's home,
and he, being influential, would have a memorial set up to you in Rome."
"Then it would be a Catholic home, would it?" asked Mike full of hope.
"Catholic?" cried Tony: "Now if that place ain't Catholic, then neither's the Pope.
They got confession boxes on every floor..." - "And mazusas on every door ..." Joe's face went bluish.
"Keep your face shut, Dan! Mazusas! That's Jewish!"
Now when Mike's mind was put at rest on the question of belief,
he signed all the policies, much to everybody present's great relief.
To celebrate the event, Mike was promised enough credit to make a drinking man bust.
Now, it's about time I told you that Marino ran a so-called 'murder trust.'

From the day and the hour that he signed his name
on the dotted line, Mike Malloy's continued existence became
a highly hazardous enterprise.

Tony said: "Hey, you guys, that man's already a physical wreck. A few bottles more
should save us involvement in offendin' the law."

On easy credit, Mike downed glass after glass
like a thirsty chevvie might soak up the gas,
And the more they poured in, the more he would soak,
till Tony got to worryin' he'd land up broke.

To help things along wood alcohol was admixed.

"Say, Mike," said Joe, "'bout time I got you fixed
one of Joe's specials. You'll have yourself a real treat.

You've never had anything like it." Mike said: "Give it me neat.

With one single gulp Mike swilled down his liquor,
and everybody looked mighty intense to see his eyes flicker.

With one hour gone without so much as a tummy rumble,
the Trust's high hopes were beginnin' to crumble.

Next they added a suspicion of rat-poison just for good measure.
and awaited developments with a strange kinda pleasure.

Sure enough Mike's eyes began to dilate,
and Tony was sure about Mike's imminent fate.

Then Mike quivered and quavered, then said: "It's loik that stuff I used to get from me mother,
God rest her soul, when I was a brat. Would it be askin' too much if y' poured me another."

Joe, with a reputation to defend, felt his blood reach the boil
at the unkind comparison with cod liver oil.

Next they softened him up with three shots of rum straight,
then gave him enough anti-freeze to seal any man's fate.

Sure enough, Mike collapsed a heap on the floor.

"Cardiac failure," said the Doc as they carried Mike out through the door.

"He can cool off in the back-room where nature can take its course.

That dose was enough to demolish a horse!"

But three hours later how they all cursed,
when in came Malloy complainin' of thirst.

They increased the dosage enough to finish a battalion,
Mike slumped onto the floor, slept it off and once again rallyin',
slouched to the bar sayin': Sorry leavin' loik dat. Now Oy feel roight as rain.
That stuff, how it sizzles and fizzles inside. Would it be askin' too much if you poured me the same drink again?"
"That guy's stomach must have a cast iron lining," was all Tony sighed.
The joker sure had taken the Trust for a ride.
Next they decided to make Mike wine and dine
on ground glass-coated beans and pure turpentine.
Just as they said: "This time is for sure, "
up bounded Malloy askin' for more.
Undiluted horse liniment and beetle killer
were all tried and found wantin' - and this is real life, no fifty-cent thriller.
Then they treated him to carpet tacks and metal shavings on bread,
which, washed down with wood alcohol, would see an elephant dead.
Complainin' of indigestion, Mike left Marino's place late in the night,
and next mornin', with no sign of Malloy, the Trust's prospects seemed bright.
As it happened, they'd counted their chickens too soon,
for Malloy turned up in the mid-afternoon.
Next time they hired the services of a cab driver, Harry Green.
They got Mike in a drunken stupor. Outside it was freezin' with winds mighty keen.
Harry drove Mike and the Trust to an out-of-the-way park,
where they left him doused with water to die in the dark.
Then they gleefully read through the obituary column,
till Mike's reappearance turned their mood mighty solemn.
At last, in despair, they called in tough Tony Bastone, a killer by trade,
who was promised a cut when the insurance was paid.
"Now you guys, " said Bastone, "quit messin' with this fancy stuff,
for murder's the game you play mighty rough."
They got Malloy drunk at tough Tony's instigation,
and drove him away to a lonely location.
In reverse, at full throttle, Harry's taxi cab sped,
Hhhtin' Malloy with a wham. He was then left for dead.

Tough Tony and the rest saw oncoming headlights and fled.
A whole week passed with no sign of Malloy,
and the Murder Trust thugs were hoopin' for joy.
Now it was time to be filin' a claim.
They needed proof, but no evidence came.
They called by at the Morgue, phoned wards, read the news,
they asked underworld hoods if they'd got any clues.
Now the day on which the mystery was solved
was the selfsame day their bright dreams dissolved.
In stalked Malloy with a smile and a wink.
"There's lots to tell, but first give us a drink.
Some fool driver had one too many, you know.
My shoulder was fractured, Oy got concussed from the blow.
That week in hospital sure did me a power of good.
The doctors would have kept me in another week if they could."
"Next time," said Bastone, "we'll leave nothing to chance.
Once too often this guy gave us a fool song and dance.
Get him drunk, take him to Joe's room, lay him out on the bed,
fix a rubber hose to his nose and gas the man dead."
And so it was that Mike breathed in his last.
His life, not his legend, belongs to the past.
Frank Manzella had a phoney death certificate filled out,
which still didn't prevent certain rumors from gettin' about.
Forensic experts get goin' like bees in their hives
when guys die with several policies recently taken out on their lives.
They had Malloy, laid to rest in a twelve-dollar coffin, exhumed.
They found traces of gas just as the police had assumed.
Tough Tony had already gotten himself shot in a gamblers' lair,
but Marino, Pasqua, Dan Kreisberg and Joe Murphey were all sent to the chair.
If Mike had conveniently died from an overdose of alcohol in the first place, no condemnin' proof could have been cited,
so you might say it was Mike Malloy's cast iron stomach was what got him indicted.
The Murder Trust crooks are dead and gone,
but Mike Malloy's legend lived on and on.

In a future age they shall retell with tireless zest

the tale of Mike Malloy, Rasputin of the West.¹⁸
Vae victis! Her quick eyes spy out the field.
Reconnoitred, the foe's dispositions have been noted,
quantified, assessed. The forces of order
and tidiness, in neat array,
perfect their alignment, await onslaught.
The sentinels stand guard:
A pot of jam, a jar of marmalade are emplaced
on the strategic salient of the dining-room table.
In battle-dress, knives, forks and spoons,
the infantry, have been fully mobilized. Now battle!

The moment's silence is conflict's omen.
Certain of the issue, she advances,
knowing all order is as brief as day,
while primal Chaos ruled
when all was void.

She crawls towards an unwary footstool,
a defenceless lone straggler near the door.
This, with one fell blow knocked out,
her target would now appear to be the oak sideboard.
With a sideways reel, the feint is over.
Blitzkrieg is launched on the dining-room table,
the heart of enemy operations. She tugs
the table-cloth; a pepper-bomb descends,
inducing heavy sneezing fits
(didn't they outlaw biological warfare?)
Thus repulsed, she makes for the paper-stand;
papers, magazines, ordered by number, edition or day,
take heavy poundings till they lie scattered,
littered on the floor.

The main assault no longer brooks delay! She tugs again--
the infantry charge down.
They miss the mark but make a hellish din.
With head well positioned for cover, she tugs
a third time, and with a mighty splut
the jam-jars teeter, topple and tumble,
and tumblers crash down with deafening jars.
With jammy hands, the victress daubs the walls,
and in triumph commemorates her feat.

By the shindy wakened, Father stalks in,
his face like that of Jupiter tonans
before the fatal blow.

Her sunny smiles pierce the dismal gloom--
O double conquest! Did Gaul, cowering
to the gore-drenched blade, love Caesar,
the British tribes, defeated, bless Agricola?
What smiles leave hard a little tear
makes tender as a lamb, and Dad,
a willing captive to her wiles, gives in--
surrender unconditional.

And Mum?

She'll do the mopping up, of course!¹⁹ TRANSMUTING GOLD A king as wise as Solomon had a temple full of gold until
a fierce fire fell upon the riches it did hold.
All treasures of the sacred fane that king could therein stash
Proved regal pomp and glory vain
Half hidden in dead ash.
A woeful monarch spied a scene too painful to behold,
For all the glories that had been were fled like Rome of old.
Yet from that chaos what strange sight did to the king appear!
For in the dimming sun's last light shone forth picture clear.

In streams of molten iron
Merged with twisted gold
Sprang forth a mighty lion
And a hero strong and bold.
He ne'er forgot the picture
In all his reign so long,
As proves a psalm in scripture,
Immortal be his song..