

APPENDIX C

Milton Verse

Over the years, the Miltonian has published a substantial quantity of verse, some of it worth preserving. What follows is a purely personal and arbitrary selection therefrom ranging over sixty years.

THE BIRTH OF ANOTHER DAY

The East is streaked with grey;
Night merges into day;
Birds carol their first lay;
 'Tis Dawn.

Pale grows the Morning Star;
The East's a crimson bar!
Behold great Phoebus' car!
 'Tis Morn.

See yonder verdant rill?
That hut upon the hill?
God's blessing on them still!
 'Tis Dawn.

Anon (March 1914).

IN THE MATOPO HILLS

See yonder range of rocky hills that stretch
For mile on mile into the filmy haze,
'Tis there indeed that I do love to roam
Among the peaks that rise from out the mists.
There Nature's work in all its glorious art
Appears, boulder on boulder poised, as if
One gentle touch would send them hurtling down
Into that silvery stream that winds its way
Far, far below along its rocky bed.

The golden sun his fiery rays of light
Despatched into the cool and shady depths,
Where with gentle sound the rippling stream
O'er tiny cliff in wild confusion fall;
Sun-tipped now shine its tiny golden drops
And soon are lost. Afar on yonder plain
The blue smoke rises from some humble home;
And there the dust-brown road leads on
Its winding way, now over stony waste,
And now it twists through smiling fields of corn
Where native women toil for their black lords.
Towards the north lies that immortal hill,
The last quiet home of him who made our land;
And as I gaze around in solitude
I proudly think: "Rhodesia is my home".

A.D. Campbell¹ (June 1920)

REMEMBRANCE

'Twas quiet all around — the hills serene
Flamed in the ardour of the Sun's last kiss,
And crimson flushed the west; the while Heaven's Queen
Rose from behind the trees — Time knows no bliss
So sweetly sad, so holy as this hour
When the day fades. There were dark silhouettes
Of boats that glided o'er the purple lake
To moorings for the night, past fairy nets
Of creepers; and the gnats' low drones to break
Eternal silence; while the whispering trees
Told their old tales; while the tall rushes swayed
To the soft knocking of a vesper breeze . . .
The perfumed flowers that slept within the glade
Still haunt the mind adown the years —
And yet she sighed — her eyes were dimmed with tears.

D.S.D. (O.M.) (October 1926)

¹The same Angus Campbell who died in World War II — see Ch. 5, p. 48.

REFINING RUGBY

Though rugger is a manly sport,
It's really time its men were taught
Some common manners that they ought
 To mingle with their vigour;
Scrum hookers, raising voice above
All others, shouldn't cry out "Shove",
But coo, as would a turtle dove,
 "Pray, push with all your figure".

Each Saturday I play with zest,
In light and dark blue shorts and vest,
With fifteen brutes upon my chest,
 The ground I tumble hard-on.
"Let out the ball, ass", rudely shout
The hooligans who've laid me out,
Instead of, as they should, no doubt,
 Politely begging pardon.

'Tis quite the proper thing, I know,
To tackle your opponent low,
But having roughly floored the foe,
 And rolled him in the dust, you
Should take him by his manly hand,
And when his sweaty brow you've fanned,
Say to him in accents bland,
 "I hope I haven't hurt you".

To race about along the grass
Beside a forward yelling "Pass!"
And if he doesn't "Oh, you ass!"
 Is wrong, we shouldn't stand it.
An era I would see begun
When men would murmur, as they run,
"If you, sir, with the ball have done,
 I prithee, to me hand it".

Trevor Wright
(with apologies) (November 1932)

LITANY FOR TIME OF DROUGHT

By the sword-sun that slew the greening things,
By the smoke silence that the morning brings,
By the high altar that the whirlwind flings,
Hear, O hear.

By the stampeding winds, by brazen skies,
By naked earth, her dust-flowers, and flies,
By locust, and grey fever at sunrise,
Hear, O hear.

By blazing sapphire days strung in time's chain,
By the drunk dreaming of a midnight rain,
By hopeless vigils, and by all the pain,
Hear, O hear.

By moon and stars long from the rivers fled,
By tears the gentle nights no more can shed,
And by the blackened, croaking, gasping dead,
Hear, O hear.

By the white ghosts of streams that haunt the peak,
By the consuming fires, by vulture's beak,
By death that comes too slow, and life-wrench shriek,
Hear, O hear.

By the salt tear that unto salt has dried,
By the hard eye where heaven's light has died,
By the dark heart where love is crucified,
Send rain, O Lord.

Dean S. Dickman (November 1932)

SUNSET

Soft creeping shapes,
Gold daggers of the eve;
Broad paths of red between the thorny trees.
Night pall of dust that o'er the thorn trees drapes.
Birds are chirping, settling at their ease.
The pheasant,
Brown clothed and quick, into a covert flies.

The frogs awake,
Down in the vlei
They sing their song to greet approaching night.
A cow and calf, the dusty, mown-grass shake.
Two bats, swift circling, mark the ending day.
A firefly flitting swiftly shows its light.
Under the kopje, everything is still.
A night-jar gives his call so long and shrill.

P.F. Drayton (December 1938)

SHADOWS

Heavy folds of sable night
Hung from pins of silver light.
Deep among the folds were
Shadows.

Not a quiver could be seen,
Robed in ebon' velvet sheen.
Night was still — nor were they Death's
Shadows.

All was living, shining bright,
All was living in that night;
Moving not, he could but shine in
Shadows.

Silver had tarnished the sable to grey,
Mortuary colours harbingered day.
Blurred were the tone in the absence of sharp
Shadows.

Light became brighter, the grey faded lighter,
The grey merged to amber, and amber turned brighter.
Colour came quickly to contrast with strong
Shadows.

So came the daybreak and thus passed the night,
So passed the sombre to sunny delight:
But steadfast in presence and ever in sight were
Shadows.

J.E. (VI) (December 1948)

There was a young man of Verdun,
Who liked to bask in the sun;
 When his back was quite brown
 He said with a frown,
“Alas! but my tummy’s not done.”

L.W. (IVA) (December 1948)

THE VELD FIRE

The drooping tresses of the grass
Moan and sigh in the idle wind:
Night creeps on with eager tread,
Draws her purple veil behind.
Silence — peace contrite falls o’er the land.
The stars appear above the trees,
Shining from their lofty height.
Drifting slowly into view
Comes the regal Queen of Night,
Smiles and moves across the peaceful sky.
With startling suddenness a glow
Lights the eastern sky — and lo!
Peace is gone forever now:
Panic is the ruling fate.
Creatures all are filled with fear,
Strive to flee this menace great.
Fire — fear to all!
Fire — hear the call
Echo down the valley face
Warning all the veld to race.
The lion runs beside the buck —
Fire equals friend and foe.
Racing from the awesome glare,
Lion with mate and buck with doe,
Heedless, break through brush and grass and reed.
Nor stop they at the river’s brink;
In they plunge, so mad with fear,
Thinking not of the lurking dread
Watching with a dreadful leer.
Death o’ertakes the fleeing buck at last —

The blackened veld is strangely still,
There the moon above the hill.
Life is gone forever now:
Creatures all are gone from here;
Quiet lies o'er all the land.
None to stir and none to fear.
Fire — death to all!
Fire — hear the call
Echo through the leafless trees,
Echo on the sighing breeze.

A.B. (3L) (1952)

DEATH ON THE ZAMBESI

Below the dropping tresses of the trees
The river runs, a peaceful, calm delight,
The reeds are rustling in the steady breeze,
And all the life surrounding is contrite.
Soft shadows ripple o'er the darkened creek,
Then ripple on until at last they rest
On yet a larger shadow, still and bleak,
That softly floats beneath the river's crest.

 A dormant, deadly Danger waits
 For prey provided by the fates.

The eagle, high above the serried green,
Is flying on towards his nest and mate,
Surveys the peaceful, silent, desolate scene
Of shining sunlight on the river great.
But wait! A rustle in the undergrowth!
A sudden, savage snarl of dreadful rage!
And then the leopard comes, creeps forward, loth
To leave the shadow of the foliage.

 The crocodile unheeding waits
 For prey provided by the fates.

The leopard limps towards the water deep,
And, thirsty, drinks with savage, selfish greed;
But now the Shadow softly starts to creep
Towards the creature, with unhurried speed,

Until its eyes, so vast, unblinking, train
Upon the unsuspecting beast. And then —
A sudden swirl — a scream of hollow pain —
The water turns to crimson in the glen.

The shadow hopefully awaits
The prey provided by the fates.

But still they thresh within the cloudy creeks;
The crocodile holds in her mouth the paw
All poisoned by a thorn, and pulls: a shriek —
The leopard starts to slip beyond the shore,
Slips on, until a sudden, dreadful scream
Of deathly anguish rends the foaming light,
And only crimson eddies break the stream,
And even they soon disappear from sight.

The crocodile no longer waits
For prey provided by the fates.

A.B. (IVA) (1953)

THE DEAD CITY

From the French poem “Ville Morte” by Albert Semain

Deep-bedded 'neath sweeping desert wastes,
Crumbled towers swathe in misty shroud
Mighty Babylon, couch'd in endless sleep,
Lost in the sands of time.
Iron-wing'd Victory once o'erstood
Puissant battlements, stairways plunging
Seaward, throng'd with peoples now travell'd on,
Bones in the empty streets.
Chaste Diana watched unblinking fall
Stone by stone, the silent void,
Dry as the river of its life.
And atop a fallen archway stands
Triumphant, pathetic, an elephant of bronze,
Trumpeting to the hollow stars.

K. O'Mahoney (Upper VI Arts) (1960)

TO THE FAIRER SEX

Dear little girl in plaits and ribbon bows,
Fat little tummy and pigeon toes,
Puffed-up cheeks all rosy red,
Sweet lips smeared in butter, and bread
Crumbs clinging to your dimpled chin,
Free from every kind of sin;
Except for the time when you strangled the cat,
And cut little holes in your father's hat,
And bit your brother's ear in two,
And smeared your mother's dress with glue.
Never smiling, always cross,
Always wanting to be boss!
Always fighting, always eating,
Never scared to take a beating.
But lo! as the years creep slowly on,
Your girlish games will soon be gone.
Now you turn your mind to boys,
Away with pigtails, sweets and toys!
You'll leave the house and be a rover;
Yes, you're "busting out all over".
High-heeled shoes, and stockings too,
Nothing's good enough for you.
Dances, parties, moonlit nights,
Cotton frocks have changed to tights.
Love affairs with strange young men,
A life of wild romance, and then . . .
Matrimony comes your way,
To have and to hold 'til your dying day.
And as the good years come and go,
And as your children learn to grow:
As your beauty fades away,
And once-gold hair has turned to grey . . .
Think back, and remember years ago
A sweet little girl with a ribbon bow
And grubby hands and dimpled chin —
Isn't age a wretched sin?

Sleep well, little pig-tailed one,
And make the best of the shining sun;
For one day some old shady tree
Will hide its light and warmth from thee.

John Eppel (U VI Arts) (1965)

POEM

When it is raining
Like it rained this afternoon —
The raindrops hissing down,
Sighing, clean and lovely —
Then I find I cannot forget you.

It was in the rains
That I first loved you,
In the cool clearness of the rains.
So whenever I hear the rain,
I see your face in the mist,
I hear your voice
In the swish of the running water . . .

One evening I longed to see you,
But it was raining,
The heavy drops drumming
On the muddy grass.
I stood on the veranda,
Not minding the fine spray,
And
I thought of you.

I saw your face and your body,
Radiant with welcome,
Greeting me, your lover . . .

There was a sprig of creeper
Falling away from the roof,
Bobbing up and down in the rain.
It was outlined against the street light,
Sharp and clear against the hazy
Misty glow of the lamp.
As I gazed at the green leaves

Running with moisture,
Dancing with the freedom
Of the sacred rain,
I thought of you.

The leaves were beautiful,
And the night, and my pain . . .

So please forgive me
If I am reminded of you
By the sighing, hissing rain.
It might be foolish,
But whenever I hear the wind
I see your face in the mist,
And I think of you.

Malcolm Fothergill (L VI Arts) (1965)

HE WAS MY FRIEND

He was my friend, but now no more.
I felt an end, and heard a door
Slam shut. And as I lie
Alone at night and sigh
At the sombre clouds, grey-black,
And the morbid moon, I think back
To the years when we
Were together and could always see
Each other's point of view.
I felt so strong and pure with you.

But, as the seed is sown and grows,
And lends itself to those
Elements which affect its life,
And, indeed, control its life,
Have I grown; and all the world
Sinful, sad, corrupt, has hurled
Temptations at my feet;
Temptations difficult to beat.
And I have drifted with the wind,

Have squandered life, destroyed and sinned
Against you: O! my friend
Of years gone by; I cannot mend
The withered chord which bound us once:
We are parted: I had my chance.

But foolish as young people are,
I chose myself, forgot the star,
Sadly shining, hopelessly;
Softly calling down to me;
But all in vain, I did not hear
Your call; nor did I care
At all. O! my friend, my friend . . .
I heard a door slam . . . felt an end.

John Eppel (U VI Arts) (1965)

JULY '67

Comes the time of death to live,
To die and sleep, to wake and grow,
Rust and yellow and red and gold,
Clothe the trees in every vale,
And leaves and buds fall and float,
To the greedy earth and its nourishment.
Stark, grey, cold and blue.
The spikes of pillars to the heavens
Swirl in unison.
And shafts of frigid air
Pull and push and beat and bend,
And never break the black gnarled wood.
And grass and stems shrink and fade
And leave the seed to lie and sleep,
To wake and stretch and crack and burst
When warm winds comforting coax,
And rain glistening drops
And ochre sun regains its strength.

I. Ross (U VI Science) (1967)

A LATIN RHYME

Flamibus kissibus sweetie Verorum
Veribus lilibus, wanti some morum
Daddibus hearibus all the noisorum
Kickibus Flamibus out of the dorum.

A. Jackson (III A1) (1969)

LOVE

To say things without speaking is love
For people only talk above
The silence
Because they are doubtful
Of the truth.

To know a subtle change of feeling
In the other, without speaking
Is love
For others would not
Recognise the change.

To know the pain of too much tenderness,
To know the joy of true happiness,
To be wounded by he,
Who can deepest wound you
Is love.

To feel that one has reached love's crowning
Is to find that tantalising
Uncertainty
Which adds exotic beauty
To that love.

Love bids you follow a stony path,
To stumble, weep, despair yet laugh
For without love
One never knows the meaning of
True joy, true life.

N. Bashall (U VI Arts) (1974)

PLEA OF THE HUNGRY CHILD

So small but
Swollen
Thin arms and legs but an
Empty,
Bloated stomach.
The large head falls into the chest,
Broken and
Helpless.

The pitiful, living
Skeleton
Lies in its foetal position
As if it had
Never
Been born.

It cries, but
No-one
Hears it beg for a
Morsel
To break its fast.

Why does no-one
Hear or
See?
It is because that
Broken child
Is now
Dead.

Mark Turnbull (L6) (1976)

DROUGHT

The blazing sun beats down
On the agony of tortured ground,
Sucking the last moisture from the sand,
Draining all life from the barren land.

Withered trees droop in battered rows,
Crouching leafless, lifeless as the dry wind blows;
Small grey lizards dart across the scorching stone,
Restless, primeval, of a time long gone.

Spiralling dust columns rise and fall,
Whirling viciously, slender and tall,
The harsh rustle of the sun-scorched grass,
Trampled flat as anxious animals pass.

The deathly silence is shattered by a buzzard's shriek,
As he wheels and turns in the milky heavens bleak,
Fiendishly marking his weakening prey,
Slowly perishing with the dying day.

Mark Foskett (2A1) (1976)

TRIBAL DRUMS

African drums,
Wild sounds,
Angry hearts,
War music!
Fists of iron pound their devilish rhythm,
Dancing figures cast stark shadows on the moonlit earth . . .
Quivering shapes of tomorrow's heroes.

Dawn breaks,
Drums beat,
Fires crackle,
Bodies gleam,
The ground shakes with warriors trampling
Forward, forward to their doom . . .
To bloody feast of devastation.

Day is done,
Battle lost,
Quiet drums . . .
Useless bloodshed and tears of sorrow:
Wives weep and comfort children.
Children today, warriors of tomorrow.

C. Kelly (Form 3) (1978)

(All attributions have been printed as they originally appeared, hence a certain inconsistency. The date in parentheses is that of the issue of "The Miltonian" in which the poem was printed.)