

## NIGHT MAIL

by W H Auden

This is the Night Mail crossing the border,  
Bringing the cheque and the postal order,  
Letters for the rich, letters for the poor,  
The shop at the corner and the girl next door.  
Pulling up Beattock, a steady climb:  
The gradient's against her, but she's on time.

Thro' sparse counties she rampages,  
Her driver's eye upon the gauges.  
Panting up past lonely farms  
Fed by the fireman's restless arms.  
Striding forward along the rails  
Thro' southern uplands with northern mails.  
Winding up the valley to the watershed,  
Thro' the heather and the weather and the dawn overhead.  
Past cotton-grass and moorland boulder  
Shovelling white steam over her shoulder,  
Snorting noisily as she passes  
Silent miles of wind-bent grasses.

Birds turn their heads as she approaches,  
Stare from the bushes at her blank-faced coaches.  
Sheepdogs cannot turn her course;  
They slumber on with paws across.  
In the farm she passes no one wakes,  
But a jug in the bedroom gently shakes.

Dawn freshens, the climb is done.  
Down towards Glasgow she descends  
Towards the steam tugs yelping down the glade of cranes,  
Towards the fields of apparatus, the furnaces  
Set on the dark plain like gigantic chessmen.  
All Scotland waits for her:

In the dark glens, beside the pale-green sea lochs  
Men long for news.

Letters of thanks, letters from banks,  
Letters of joy from the girl and the boy,  
Receipted bills and invitations  
To inspect new stock or visit relations,  
And applications for situations  
And timid lovers' declarations  
And gossip, gossip from all the nations,  
News circumstantial, news financial,  
Letters with holiday snaps to enlarge in,  
Letters with faces scrawled in the margin,  
Letters from uncles, cousins, and aunts,  
Letters to Scotland from the South of France,  
Letters of condolence to Highlands and Lowlands  
Notes from overseas to Hebrides  
Written on paper of every hue,  
The pink, the violet, the white and the blue,  
The chatty, the catty, the boring, adoring,  
The cold and official and the heart's outpouring,  
Clever, stupid, short and long,  
The typed and the printed and the spelt all wrong.

Thousands are still asleep  
Dreaming of terrifying monsters,  
Or of friendly tea beside the band at Cranston's or Crawford's:  
Asleep in working Glasgow, asleep in well-set Edinburgh,  
Asleep in granite Aberdeen,  
They continue their dreams,  
And shall wake soon and long for letters,  
And none will hear the postman's knock  
Without a quickening of the heart,  
For who can bear to feel himself forgotten?

# Funeral Blues

**W. H. Auden**

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,  
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,  
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum  
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead  
Scribbling on the sky the message He Is Dead,  
Put crepe bows round the white necks of the public doves,  
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,  
My working week and my Sunday rest,  
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;  
I thought that love would last for ever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now: put out every one;  
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun;  
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood.  
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

**IF**

**Rudyard Kipling**

If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim;  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same;  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings  
And never breathe a word about your loss;  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
' Or walk with Kings - nor lose the common touch,  
if neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much;  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And - which is more - you'll be a Man, my son!

# Rupert Brooke

## The Old Vicarage, Grantchester

(Cafe des Westens, Berlin, May 1912)

...

God! I will pack, and take a train,  
And get me to England once again!  
For England's the one land, I know,  
Where men with Splendid Hearts may go;  
And Cambridgeshire, of all England,  
The shire for Men who Understand;  
And of THAT district I prefer  
The lovely hamlet Grantchester.

...

Ah God! to see the branches stir  
Across the moon at Grantchester!  
To smell the thrilling-sweet and rotten  
Unforgettable, unforgotten  
River-smell, and hear the breeze  
Sobbing in the little trees.  
Say, do the elm-clumps greatly stand  
Still guardians of that holy land?  
The chestnuts shade, in reverend dream,  
The yet unacademic stream?  
Is dawn a secret shy and cold  
Anadyomene, silver-gold?  
And sunset still a golden sea  
From Haslingfield to Madingley?  
And after, ere the night is born,  
Do hares come out about the corn?  
Oh, is the water sweet and cool,  
Gentle and brown, above the pool?

And laughs the immortal river still  
Under the mill, under the mill?  
Say, is there Beauty yet to find?  
And Certainty? and Quiet kind?  
Deep meadows yet, for to forget  
The lies, and truths, and pain? . . . oh! yet  
Stands the Church clock at ten to three?  
And is there honey still for tea?

# From a Railway Carriage - Robert Louis Stevenson

BY STEVIE SMITH 1902–1971 Stevie Smith

From A Railway Carriage

Faster than fairies, faster than witches,  
Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches;  
And charging along like troops in a battle  
All through the meadows the horses and cattle:  
All of the sights of the hill and the plain  
Fly as thick as driving rain;  
And ever again, in the wink of an eye,  
Painted stations whistle by.  
Here is a child who clambers and scrambles,  
All by himself and gathering brambles;  
Here is a tramp who stands and gazes;  
And there is the green for stringing the daisies!  
Here is a cart run away in the road  
Lumping along with man and load;  
And here is a mill, and there is a river:  
Each a glimpse and gone for ever!

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)

**SCENE I. France. Before Harfleur.**

*Alarum. Enter KING HENRY, EXETER, BEDFORD, GLOUCESTER, and Soldiers, with scaling-ladders*

**KING HENRY V**

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more;  
Or close the wall up with our English dead.  
In peace there's nothing so becomes a man  
As modest stillness and humility:  
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,  
Then imitate the action of the tiger;  
Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,  
Disguise fair nature with hard-favour'd rage;  
Then lend the eye a terrible aspect;  
Let pry through the portage of the head  
Like the brass cannon; let the brow o'erwhelm it  
As fearfully as doth a galled rock  
O'erhang and jutty his confounded base,  
Swill'd with the wild and wasteful ocean.  
Now set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide,  
Hold hard the breath and bend up every spirit  
To his full height. On, on, you noblest English.  
Whose blood is fet from fathers of war-proof!  
Fathers that, like so many Alexanders,  
Have in these parts from morn till even fought  
And sheathed their swords for lack of argument:  
Dishonour not your mothers; now attest  
That those whom you call'd fathers did beget you.  
Be copy now to men of grosser blood,  
And teach them how to war. And you, good yeoman,  
Whose limbs were made in England, show us here

The mettle of your pasture; let us swear  
That you are worth your breeding; which I doubt not;  
For there is none of you so mean and base,  
That hath not noble lustre in your eyes.  
I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,  
Straining upon the start. The game's afoot:  
Follow your spirit, and upon this charge  
Cry 'God for Harry, England, and Saint George!'

*Exeunt. Alarum, and chambers go off*

**Part of a speech given to the House of Commons on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 1940**

When we consider how much greater would be our advantage in defending the air above this Island against an overseas attack, I must say that I find in these facts a sure basis upon which practical and reassuring thoughts may rest. I will pay my tribute to these young airmen. The great French Army was very largely, for the time being, cast back and disturbed by the onrush of a few thousands of armored vehicles. May it not also be that the cause of civilization itself will be defended by the skill and devotion of a few thousand airmen? There never has been, I suppose, in all the world, in all the history of war, such an opportunity for youth. The Knights of the Round Table, the Crusaders, all fall back into the past-not only distant but prosaic; these young men, going forth every morn to guard their native land and all that we stand for, holding in their hands these instruments of colossal and shattering power, of whom it may be said that

Every morn brought forth a noble chance  
And every chance brought forth a noble knight,

deserve our gratitude, as do all the brave men who, in so many ways and on so many occasions, are ready, and continue ready to give life and all for their native land.

*The address ended with these remarks:*

I have, myself, full confidence that if all do their duty, if nothing is neglected, and if the best arrangements are made, as they are being made, we shall prove ourselves once again able to defend our Island home, to ride out the storm of war, and to outlive the menace of tyranny, if necessary for years, if necessary alone. At any rate, that is what we are going to try to do. That is the resolve of His Majesty's Government-every man of them. That is the will of Parliament and the nation. The British Empire and the French Republic, linked together in their cause and in their need, will defend to the death their native soil, aiding each other like good comrades to the utmost of their strength. Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this Island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old.

## **O Ship of State**

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Thou, too, sail on, O Ship of State!  
Sail on, O Union, strong and great!  
Humanity with all its fears,  
With all the hopes of future years,  
Is hanging breathless on thy fate!  
We know what Master laid thy keel,  
What Workmen wrought thy ribs of steel,  
Who made each mast, and sail, and rope,  
What anvils rang, what hammers beat,  
In what a forge and what a heat  
Were shaped the anchors of thy hope!  
Fear not each sudden sound and shock,  
'Tis of the wave and not the rock;  
'Tis but the flapping of the sail,  
And not a rent made by the gale!  
In spite of rock and tempest's roar,  
In spite of false lights on the shore,  
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!  
Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee.  
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,  
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,  
Are all with thee, -are all with thee!

I am not the pheasant plucker,  
I'm the pheasant plucker's mate.  
I am only plucking pheasants  
'cause the pheasant plucker's running late.

The Leith police dismisseth us  
They thought we sought to stay;  
The Leith police dismisseth us  
They thought we'd stay all day.  
The Leith police dismisseth us,  
We both sighed sighs apiece;  
And the sighs that we sighed as we said goodbye  
Were the size of the Leith police.

The Leith police dissmiseth us,  
I'm thankful sir to say,  
The Leith Police dismisseth us,  
They thought we sought to stay,  
The Leith Police dismisseth us,  
We both sighed sighs apiece,  
And the sighs we sighed as we waved goodbye,  
Was the size of the Leith Police.

## NAMING OF PARTS

**Reed, Henry.** "Naming of Parts." *New Statesman and Nation* 24, no. 598 (8 August 1942):

To-day we have naming of parts. Yesterday,  
We had daily cleaning. And to-morrow morning,  
We shall have what to do after firing. But to-day,  
To-day we have naming of parts. *Japonica*  
*Glistens like coral in all of the neighbouring gardens,*  
*And to-day we have naming of parts.*

This is the lower sling swivel. And this  
Is the upper sling swivel, whose use you will see,  
When you are given your slings. And this is the piling swivel,  
Which in your case you have not got. *The branches*  
*Hold in the gardens their silent, eloquent gestures,*  
*Which in our case we have not got.*

This is the safety-catch, which is always released  
With an easy flick of the thumb. And please do not let me  
See anyone using his finger. You can do it quite easy  
If you have any strength in your thumb. *The blossoms*  
*Are fragile and motionless, never letting anyone see*  
*Any of them using their finger.*

And this you can see is the bolt. The purpose of this  
Is to open the breech, as you see. We can slide it  
Rapidly backwards and forwards: we call this

Easing the spring. *And rapidly backwards and forwards*  
*The early bees are assaulting and fumbling the flowers:*  
*They call it easing the Spring.*

They call it easing the Spring: it is perfectly easy  
If you have any strength in your thumb: like the bolt,  
And the breech, and the cocking-piece, and the point of balance,  
Which in our case we have not got; *and the almond-blossom*  
*Silent in all of the gardens and the bees going backwards and*  
*forwards, For to-day we have naming of parts.*



**Slow Train**  
**(Michael Flanders)**

*Millers Dale for Tideswell*  
*Kirby Muxloe*  
*Mow Cop and Scholar Green*

No more will I go to Blandford Forum and Morteheo,  
On the slow train from Midsummer Norton and Mumby Road,  
    No churns, no porter,  
    No cat on a seat,  
At Chorlton-cum-Hardy and Chester-le-Street  
We won't be meeting again on the slow train.

I'll travel no more from Littleton Badsey to Openshaw,  
At Long Stanton I'll stand well clear of the doors no more,  
    No whitewashed pebbles,  
    No up and no down,  
From Formby Four Crosses to Dunstable Town,  
I won't be going again on the slow train.

On the main line and the goods siding,  
    The grass grows high,  
At Dog Dyke, Tumby Woodside, and Troublehouse Halt.  
    The sleepers sleep at Audlem and Ambergate,  
No passenger waits on Chittening platform or Cheslyn Hay,

No-one departs, no-one arrives,  
    From Selby to Goole,  
    From St. Erth to St. Ives,  
They all passed out of our lives,  
    On the slow train,  
    On the slow train.  
*Cockermouth for Buttermere*  
    On the slow train.  
*Armley Moor Arram*  
*Pye Hill and Somercotes*  
    On the slow train.  
*Windmill End.....*

**A Red, Red Rose**  
**By Robert Burns (1759 – 1796)**

1.  
O, my luve's like a red, red rose,  
That's newly sprung in June.  
O, my luve's like the melodie,  
That's sweetly play'd in tune.

2.  
As fair art thou, my bonie lass,  
So deep in luve am I,  
And I will luve thee still, my Dear,  
Till a' the seas gang dry.

3.  
Till a' the seas gang dry, my Dear,  
And the rocks melt wi' the sun!  
O I will luve thee still, my Dear,  
While the sands o' life shall run.

4.  
And fare thee weel, my only Luve,  
And fare thee weel a while!  
And I will come again, my Luve,  
Tho' it were ten thousand mile!

Arthur Hugh Clough. 1819–1861

**741. Say not the Struggle Naught availeth**

SAY not the struggle naught availeth,  
The labour and the wounds are vain,  
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,  
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;                   5  
It may be, in yon smoke conceal'd,  
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,  
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,                   10  
Seem here no painful inch to gain,  
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,  
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,  
When daylight comes, comes in the light;  
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly!                   15  
But westward, look, the land is bright!

## **The Burning of the Leaves**

*Laurence Binyon (1869 – 1943)*

Now is the time for the burning of the leaves,  
They go to the fire; the nostrils prick with smoke  
Wandering slowly into the weeping mist.  
Brittle and blotched, ragged and rotten sheaves!  
A flame seizes the smouldering ruin, and bites  
On stubborn stalks that crackle as they resist.  
The last hollyhock's fallen tower is dust:  
All the spices of June are a bitter reek,  
All the extravagant riches spent and mean.  
All burns! the reddest rose is a ghost.  
Spark whirl up, to expire in the mist: the wild  
Fingers of fire are making corruption clean.  
Now is the time for stripping the spirit bare,  
Time for the burning of days ended and done,  
Idle solace of things that have gone before,  
Rootless hope and fruitless desire are there:  
Let them go to the fire with never a look behind.  
That world that was ours is a world that is ours no more.  
They will come again, the leaf and the flower, to arise  
From squalor of rottenness into the old splendour,  
And magical scents to a wondering memory bring;  
The same glory, to shine upon different eyes.  
Earth cares for her own ruins, naught for ours.  
Nothing is certain, only the certain spring

## **TREES**

*by: Joyce Kilmer (1886-1918)*

I THINK that I shall never see  
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest  
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in Summer wear  
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;  
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree.

## A SUBALTERN'S LOVE SONG

*Miss J Hunter Dunn, Miss J Hunter Dunn,  
Furnish'd and burnish'd by Aldershot sun,  
What strenuous singles we played after tea,  
We in the tournament – you against me!*

*Love-thirty, love-forty, oh! weakness of joy,  
The speed of a swallow, the grace of a boy,  
With carefulest carelessness, gaily you won,  
I am weak from your loveliness, Joan Hunter Dunn.*

*Miss Joan Hunter Dunn, Miss Joan Hunter Dunn,  
How mad I am, sad I am, glad that you won,  
The warm-handled racket is back in its press,  
But my shock-headed victor, she loves me no less.*

*Her father's euonymus shines as we walk,  
And swing past the summerhouse, buried in talk,  
And cool the verandah that welcomes us in  
To the six-o'clock news and a lime-juice and gin.*

*The scent of the conifers, sound of the bath,  
The view from my bedroom of moss-dappled path,  
As I struggle with double-end evening tie,  
For we dance at the Golf Club, my victor and I.*

*On the floor of her bedroom lie blazer and shorts,  
And the cream-coloured walls are be-trophied with sports,  
And westering, questioning settles the sun,  
On your low-leaded window, Miss Joan Hunter Dunn.*

*The Hillman is waiting, the light's in the hall,  
The pictures of Egypt are bright on the wall,  
My sweet, I am standing beside the oak stair  
And there on the landing's the light on your hair.*

*By roads "not adopted", by woodland ways,  
She drove to the club in the late summer haze,  
Into nine-o'clock Camberley, heavy with bells  
And mushroomy, pine-woody, evergreen smells.*

*Miss Joan Hunter Dunn, Miss Joan Hunter Dunn,  
I can hear from the car park the dance has begun,  
Oh! Surrey twilight! importunate band!  
Oh! strongly adorable tennis-girl's hand!*

*Around us are Rovers and Austins afar,  
Above us the intimate roof of the car,  
And here on my right is the girl of my choice,  
With the tilt of her nose and the chime of her voice.*

*And the scent of her wrap, and the words never said,  
And the ominous, ominous dancing ahead.  
We sat in the car park till twenty to one  
And now I'm engaged to Miss Joan Hunter Dunn.*

John Betjeman