



## Robert Hellam

### St. Fagan's Castle, the Italian Gardens

In Cardiff castle gardens, how the prospect does bewitch—  
That stream of gleaming doves that through the dappled green boughs stitch.  
This prancing little squirrel makes the dancing branches twitch  
On pines entwined in every kind of knuckled twist and hitch.  
These grounds resound with echoes from old days among the rich—  
And we, who spring from common folk who lived beyond the ditch,  
Can hear in spirit ancient songs ring at their noblest pitch.

### The Greatest

The greatest poem I ever never wrote  
Was surely one of those I did compose  
But never got around to writing down.  
And some were all but done and very good  
While others got as far as Coleridge  
Before the pesky man from Porlock came.  
Still others were but snatches, rhythmic bites  
Of sound and sense and shade and textured light  
That never got from mind to pen to page.  
Do all those mighty words exist somewhere,  
Or are they lost and out of reach for always  
Like little, near-remembered bits of dream?

### **Kaniwaniboomboom, the Royal Dancer**

Free, in the firelit forest glade she dances.  
Mark how each graceful move she's made entrances,  
How now the play of light and shade enhances  
Each feature of the lady as she dances.  
Then look on how the lovely lady glances  
At him who to this magic glade advances  
And, by the pretty music swayed, now chances  
Upon the Princess Kaniwaniboomboom.

### **Not Quite Moonset, Last Evening in Summer**

Twilight has faded  
A half moon, looking inlit,  
seems to float quite near

## To a Sergeant in Iraq, from His Father Back Home

When fathers start a war and send their sons,  
They pray the war will end in victory.  
They pray the war will end and soon be done.  
They pray the war will end with victims few.  
They pray the war will end and peace will last.  
They pray the war will end, their sons come home.

When battles rage abroad, how fares the home?  
Old mothers fret and pray about their sons,  
And children hope Dad will return at last  
In glory won in hard-fought victory.  
But wives just want the wounded to be few,  
Their husbands spared, when all is said and done.

And when the war is over, won and done,  
And all the sons and daughters come back home,  
May all their injuries be slight and few  
And fathers be united with their sons  
In keeping faith, to keep the victory,  
To be assured that peace and justice last.

For peace must be the aim of war at last,  
And peace survives when it sees justice done.  
For unjust peace will steal the victory  
From those who fought and those who stayed at home.  
So give all honor to our fighting sons,  
And keep the gains won by those gallant few.

The gains of war will always be but few.  
Flag-waving fervor never seems to last.  
We never must forget our hero sons  
Who do a bloody job that must be done,  
And all for love of country, love of home,  
They soldier on until the victory.

So pray that even past the victory  
The carping critics' numbers will be few  
As all our sons and daughters come back home  
(With memories, we pray, that will not last),  
As they return and do what must be done  
For parents, spouses, daughters, and for sons.

For victory will fade. It will but last  
A few short years if justice is not done  
At home, abroad, for daughters and for sons.

### **The Death of Li Po**

Reflected on the pond, as on a glass,  
He saw the moon, and hungered to embrace  
Her beauty, saw his own reflected face  
United unto hers. It came to pass  
That as he leaned as if he could amass  
All heaven's beauty in the cozy space  
Of his extended arms, he lost his place  
And slipped from shore to water. Then, alas,  
Were Li Po's face and body lost to sight,  
To come no more to banter with his friends  
Or write one more of his enchanted lines.  
Look now at moonlight gleaming in the night  
On nothing but the ripples' folds and bends  
That shimmer where the moon's reflection shines.

There once was a short-necked giraffe  
Who made all the zookeepers laugh.  
And his spots were a mess!  
They amounted to less  
Than the number expected by half.