

The Royal Throne

Canto the First

*A Canto brief, though well Proportioned,
Where Princely Schemes, duely apportioned,
Are made to measure by the yard
For dainty King—a right galliard,
Perfectly suited for such Modern Times
Of awful verse and worser ryhmes.*

The forecast was for frightful Reign:
Darkly clouds, darkest disdain.
With Princes, dregs of Incest Born
With seeds of Justice all forsworn,
Aborted hope, with infant cry,
Calls in vane for fair ally.
Princesses too, were hardly better
And with that Reign perhaps were wetter:
Moist and meaty, though they were—
And gave new meaning to royal coffer—
'Twas all for fun, they knew at least,
Off'ring themselves as royal feast.
Protected by beefeater and guard,
The parade appeared a right charade.

And so lies our Queen, in failing health,

The death bed now her Commonwealth.

Woe is she and woe the Nation

Woe is all in anticipation:

“When I depart, who then might Rule?

Oh, surely not my Princely Fool?”

Her eldest son she thinks but little:

If he should Rule she thinks that it’ll

Bring down the Nation; and the age *d’or*

Will ne’er be as it’s been before.

Outside Prince Charming, most apprehensive,
Through key-hole hears and turns all pensive.

“A Prince *and* King, ’tis Truly me!”

He’s twice the man he used to be!

Twice said twice done, twice contemplation,

But half the man to lead a Nation?

No such thing—he knows his mettle,

Some Stratagem he needs must settle,

To show the world his High Born importance

And win the Nation’s fixéd allegiance.

“Oh woe is me, and me is woe!”

For not one notion apropos

To drearest dirth and dire dread,

Sits anywhere within his head.

A vast and spacious place it seems

With crooked windows, crooked beams,

With chairs and table—though still no guests.

And some might think that this attests
The inhospitality of his mind,
That no idea there can he find;
But no, you see, one comes a-calling,
Sits down with limbs relaxed and sprawling.
A handsome fellow, a Smart Idea:
Prince Charming greets him with Good cheer.
They wag their chins in idle chatter,
Until the guest gets to the matter
Of his coming here, of his coming hither
To forestall all that stormy weather.

“Oh Charming Prince”—Prince Charming he—
“To Charm the Nation: your cup of tea.
Sugar sweet, and piping hot,
Rest on your Laurels you should not.
Make them like you, love you too,
The Nation must be your Choicest Brew.
A man of the People, show yourself to be
A man of great Knowing and Philosophy!
A man of Wit, of Politics well versed,
A man of Courage in that all he durst.
A man of Taste, schooled in Aesthetics,
A man of Skill, expert in Athletics—
Be sure to conceal your varied prosthetics!
All these and more show yourself to be
As Second Nature is to Pedigree.

And then your Reign 'twill be quite fine!"

The Prince invites his guest to dine

On food for thought' "Eat all you will."

But scraps ne'er could an Idea fill.

And so Prince Charming, that very day,
Puts Plot and Plan well underway:

To quit his castle and vast entertaining

And off he went political campaigning.

Like Knight of Old: Sir Hudibras or some-other,

Anticipating the bountiful death of his mother:

His business was Earnest, an Arthurian quest,

Soliciting the Nation—their Wealth in his chest.

A task, no doubt, daunting, that spurred consternation,

Prince Charming must contend with his Ill Reputation:

A steed most unruly, never canter but run,

A Hobby-Horse that he sooner wust shun,

That barely could carry a Knight and his Armour

And hardly could help Prince Charming feel calmer.

A lady-old—a Mother figure
His life-long love that love ne'r shall wither.

A secret affair, though now divorced,

The Prince seemed free to run his course.

Yet Tabloid Stories, with naught for plot,

Took peeping-tom pictures of the lot.

The Nation talked of Scandal still,

With Catholic taste, divorce judged ill.

A task that would tax the bestest of men,
Prince Charming must o'come the poison of pen.
If flogging a dead horse as metaphor comes easy
Think not of such scandal, the Prince is not sleazy.

So Royal court Prince bids, "Adieu."
The Royal throne his point of view.
The gates all close, Prince Charming rides,
And to his trusty steed—Ill Reputation—confides:

"Something amiss, I feel something missing,
Something that halts my forward progressing.
Ah, now I have it, a Trusty Companion,
With whom I might share my knowing opinion,
To travel with me this mendacious dominion."
Just then he espied one of uncertain station,
A loitering dandy with due affectation;
A coxcomb well versed in self-congratulation.

"Yon fellow," calls Charming, "your name and
pedigree?"

"Jack to my friends, skilled in Repartee,
Though my Mother ne'r was quite known to me."

"A bastard then, is that all your worth?"

"A bastard indeed, but only by birth."

And so Prince Charming, impressed by this Sense,
Took Jack as his squire—no mind of expense.

'A yeman hadde he and servants no mo,'
The likes of which Chaucer could never have bore.

"Good fellow, together we'll ride through this Nation
Take high road and low without discrimination."

Like Hudibras and Ralph, they set on their way,
Seeking the fame of Fortuitous day.

Poor Jack, without steed, pursued on his bike,
Peddling hard: he'd much rather hike.

And all of a sudden, Jack calls to the Prince,

"I have such a Plan, with which I envince
A moment of glory for you and your steed,
From which all the Nation will have to believe,
Your mettle, your worth, your high ranking birth,
Are fit for a Ruler of such solemn mirth.

Look there," pointed Jack, "you see the sign:

'The Polo Nationals' are starting at nine.

And you such a player, you'll surely be best:

All Glory to win, without much a test."

With Ill Reputation between his legs,
Prince Charming rides onward and Good Fortune begs
Some small assistance to help in the game
And show all the Nation the right of his claim.

"That fellow plays polo like no man on Earth,
Thank God for the Glory of his Royal Birth."

Indeed he can hear the future acclaim

That hangs like a Parasite onto his name.

And so almost heady with anticipation,

The Prince gallops in to great jubilation;

But then, loathsome Fate, with so wicked a smile,
Has something in store, Prince Charming to rile:
In terms of mistake, this one is a whopper,
And almost at once the Prince comes a cropper;
Almost at once he feels like a Fool,
His steed and his pride both fall in the *Pool*.
We see from this tale the importance of reading,
As well as the value of public-school breeding:
Poor Jack, hapless fellow, "Polo" he read
The prefix "Water" n'er entered his head.
"Prince Makes Great Splash," the headlines all said.

A Sunday of months were soon all past by,
All Pious and Solemn all Pleasures deny—
Except for one morning, a tampon considered
A dream from which he ne'r was delivered.

"Enough of this idle, a new formulation
Some cunning idea to impress the Nation!
A Man of the People, ho, that's how I must seem,
So think, dear old Jack, a new cunning scheme."

"I have it in one," quoth Jack with nonchalance,
I have such a Plan to set them off-balance.
A job you shall have: so humble a living,
And think pennies are tanners and tanners a shilling,
And shillings are guineas and guineas a fiver:
I suggest you become a London Bus Driver."

"A spiffing idea, what, they'll love me for that—"

"And perhaps you can live in an old Council Flat."

"Good ho, my Good fellow, my Squirey Jack—"

"And eat fish 'n' chips from a newspaper that
Speaks ill of the royals, reports laced with scorn:
Then who can deny the right of first-Born?
And drink Tetley's bitter from containers with widgets."

"That's going too far, a Prince with some midgets . .
. ?"

We grant, though Blessed with Some Understanding
The wit of the Prince was far from expanding;
Indeed, it was kept in an old plumbers box,
That once was a store for Royal Ballcocks.
He kept it secure, seldom taking it out,
Except for those times when, no one about,
He'd pull it and tug it for all it was worth
And often increase it by Length and by Girth.

So soon they quit the Ritz-Hilton-Carlton
Moved to a bedsit near Tooting and Fartem:
And soon as he was ever quite able,
He joined the rest of working rabble.
A Double-Decker was his choice:
An Omnibus; he did rejoice
Of honest labour and simple folk,
Though soon did really quite provoke
These simple people, coming and going
By changing the route, the intent of showing

The architectural sights, both here and there:
Buildings of which they were hardly aware.

"Hey love, where ya goin'? this ain't the right way?"
An elderly wench was forthright to say.
"This ain't my street you made a wrong turning."

"But learn my Good dame to be more Discerning.
This street is renowned for the finest of building.
Look yonder, and see? the *breadth* of the guilding.
Good British Architecture at its best:
Corinthian Columns along with the rest:
Fluting and Scotia and Torus and Plinth
What more could you want from a bus ride to Finch'?
Corbeled Arches and Splendid Cupola,
Nothing like this in France or Angola.
Typanum, Louver window, Rococo Embellished—"

"Those bloody old buildings, they should be
demolished!"

"My very Good wench, you surely must see
The remarkable worth of this fine Apogee
Of Culture and Taste and finest design,
Those crumbling walls are an architect's shrine.
Oh, Marvellous Manaras, with Many a Story
The beauty of which is *a posteriori*
The best of Britain, Designed and Invented
Fixed in time, well placed and cemented."

"That's all very well," the wench did say

"But the road you are taking, 'tis right out my way.

I live on a street quite different by far."

"Then 'tis time that you movèd from where that you are."

"You cheeky young stripling, you insolent lad,
I'll complain to your boss—he'll be ever so mad."

A moral indeed, 'tis really quite clear:

Bus diver, chauffeur, chief gondolier:

Pay Goodly attention to where thou dost steer.

In great melancholy the Prince and his Squire
To public house—on public feet—a drink to acquire.

"Try Tetley's Best Bitter 'twill cheer you upeth
LandLord, Good fellow, fill up his cupeth."

The cupeth filled, the Prince with no shame,
Asked Vintage and Beeryard from whence it came.

"A 90 indeed," the landLord did quip,
"From Stoke-on-Trent, and please leave a tip."

Next day, when Jack explained this and more
Prince Charming, resigned, reservèd and sure:

"Enough of this 'man of the people,' Good Squire
'Til some future day when the people are higher
In birth and breeding and fine etiquette;
I'll lower my-self not by one half a step."

"I have a new Plan, with such engineering
'T'will surely *turn-coat*, and so endearing
You once and for Good and Truly for all

Prince Charming, indeed, thou shalt go to the ball."

By which he meant, the great Coronation
Thinking it some kind of dancing formation,
With movement all Planned in Choreograph
No place for a shuffle, chuckkle or laugh.
Where Lords and Ladies, all decked in their best,
With Spingles and Spangles a-loose on their breast
Make dainty foot movement from life-time of learning
For Royal Preferment: the goal of their Yearning.

"Good fellow, my Squire, my Jackery man
Tell me indeed, what is the new Plan?
And prey, make it smart and wearing red boots."

"Indeed my Prince, 'tis so smart it hoots.
This epoch exceeds others, clearly by far:
Mass communication will make you a star
That hangs in Elysian Fields high above
A heavenly body the Lord that we love."

"But how can we do it, what Gift shall I show?
What Talent, what Calling what dainty *morceau*?"

"I have it, I know it, all praise and Eureka
We'll make you a high-brow Radio Speaker:
One of those fellows who blabs Philosophic
And teachers the Nation things telescopic.
Distant Notions, vague Hypotheses
Thou shalt bring them close with the greatest of ease.
Explain to the people Aristotle and Plato

Calvin and Hobbes and the greatest Horatio.

No sooner said—'twas done much later:
Goodfinger, RS's finest curator,
And Oxbridge, great Poet Laureate,
Were gathered like some learned conglomerate.
And so the Prince, in darkness sitting,
Betwixt these men, 'twas quite befitting.
And BBC Radio Four all a-ready,
The Show now began: the Prince feeling heady.
A Goonish idea came into his mind . . .

"Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to *Mankind*:
The show that explores what can't be defined.
And welcome this week our own Royal Prince,
Who joins with our panel the world to convince
That Rules of logic, in things of morality
Bring order and sense and certain finality.
Prince Charming, Plato's cave, what's the meaning?
We know of the wall, but what of the ceiling?"
Replies the Prince, though with uncertain usage:

"Enter Bluebottle, pauses for applause, not a
sausage."

"I beg humble pardon, could you be *less* clear?"

"Where's Minnie Bannister, she's such an old dear.
And Bloodnock and Eccles and Gry Type Thyne,
They're late for the show, it started at nine."

"This isn't the *Goon Show*, it's *Mankind* by name."

"Well Goodness me, I thought it the same."

We see, by now, a moral in store,

True in this case as heretofore:

Wireless Goons will live ever more.

Ignominious, 'twas *the* final word

Though seldom so loudly and clearly heard.

"The failure is taxing, I must abdicate."

"Your mother's still living, you'll just have to wait."

"Indeed, indeed, but what can I do?"

"I have such a Plan to offer to you,

'Tis likely will meet with some ballyhoo:

Quit the city, to country we'll go,

'Tis more to your Nature; besides we will show

Your insight, your foresight, your *farsight* as well

Pertaining to farming and growing in general

Teach yeoman and tenant such Good Husbandry

With all your vast Wisdom and Pedantry."

"Good Squire, my Jack, my fellowy man

You know I shall do the best that I can.

Onward and forward, the direction I seek

Lies surely beneath my own very feet."

For Ill Reputation 'twas a three day ride,

(Especially with the Prince ne'er astride);

And certainly sure, it could have been longer

But with each of these Plans he grew daily stronger.

A glorious steed, nowhere was his equal—
Well, not in this story, though perhaps in the sequel.

In Home County they came, just after mid-day
A curious lane on route to Bombay,
No more of the Empire, though we still possess
Cardiff and Belfast and all Inverness.

"Good Jack, my fellow, my Squire, my man
The strangest of feelings begin to began.
I suddenly notice a thing most Sublime:
Whenever I speak the words come in Rhyme."

"'Tis Normal my Prince, with Vastest Dominion
Even your words respect your Opinion.
Like soldiers who stand in line on parade,
Your language is likewise also arrayed.
(And some might say, profoundly clichéd)."

"Ah look, a farmer, hard at it, I'd say."

"The wench is most willing, and in some disarray."

"No wonder, they do it right there in the hay.
Oh, simple pleasure, oh country life."

"Not quite so simple: here comes his wife."

In some other field, Enclosed for a Century,
A tenant was working his land most exemplary.

"I say," calls the Prince, his opinion to offer,
"That's not how you do it, not fitting, not proper.
The Poison you spray keeps your crops nice and healthy
But the cost of it all, thou shalt never be wealthy."

"What else can I do, to protect 'em from insects
And air-Born virus and all Nature's defects?"

"'Tis simple indeed, make Nature your Lord
For he is bountiful, God this has assured.
Rotation for one, diversification another
And Good Natural Compost will keep it together.
I preach what I practise on my Vastest Estate,
The success of which I shall shortly relate.
Insect, Bacteria, Virus, and Fungus
Are not such problems though seeming Humungous
Set one on the other and be rid of the group
Without the expense of a pesticide soup.
Prevention is generally better than cure
And constant vigilance success to secure.
Chemical sprays and all hydrocarbons
Will not in the end help your Fortune or Gardens.
Noxious substance and prickly practice
Are to the detriment of homo-erectus.
Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane¹
Will never replace old ways that stay-the-same."
The Prince gave all kinds of laboured ideas
So convincing was he to the labourers' ears,
A Town-Hall meeting was soonest Proposed

¹'Tis an unusual word, we admit, though accurate in both meaning and usage. The trick, 'tis to say it in meter.

Where farmers from far were all unopposed
To such as the Prince decreed they should follow:
Organic Farming the Nation did swallow.
'Tis Good that they did, for food was soon rare:
And Hardly a crust for peasants share.
Famine in vengeance swallowed the Nation:

 "'Tis Truly a cure for all constipation."
And so, thus showing, Good taste to be lacking
Peasant and Lord sent Prince Charming packing
Off to France, in utter exile
Better off there: the Frenchies to rile.
And so the moral, we freely admit,
Is mind your own business and *nurture* your wit
Or else all the Nation will think you a twit.

 Jack the Jack, a book of his story
Describing those Travels—with full count of his Glory—
With hapless Prince, well written with art,
And concealing the guilt of his own guilty part,
Became a best-seller, a publisher's dream,
The final Chapter of his cunning scheme.
Goodly young Jack, now cast in gold,
A wond'rous sight, the Nation now sold
On his manly strength and all certitude
No doubt of a doubtfully doubt was imbued.
A fellow Born of an humble green-grocer
The future, for now, could hardly seem rosier.

Such humble oranges, such breeding to lack,
Such power, such foresight, such contemptible knack:
And now, all hail: God Save Good King Jack.