

Ruins – a trilogy of Hope

Syria 2014

Ruined city, ruined lives.
Bomb-shattered streets, debris littered:
House-fronts destroyed by mortar fire.
No privacy. The world can see
Ruined homes.

Shoppers have not the means to pay;
Shops have no windows to display;
Ruined livelihoods.

Churches and mosques once far apart
United now in rubble piles:
Ruined worship, ruined faith.

Children count bricks where schools once stood,
Their present task to search for food -
Ruined futures.

A child stands in a long, long line
Of people taking gifts of bread
To ease the unrelenting ache,
The hunger in their staring eyes.
He waits his turn, so full of hope,
Watches the last bread handed down ...
To an old man in front of him.
His face contorted, biting lips
Fighting back his childhood tears.
War has made a cruel gift to him –
It turns a child into a man.
Ruined infancy.

A Jug is a Mug is a Memory

It's really only half a jug
More like a well-worn spotty mug
Dug from an ancient battlefield.
Mug of a jug!

Inherited from auntie Grace
Who shared our lives for quite a while,
This jug is filled with memories
Of sunshine childhood days with her
Who understood our little ways,
Excused us when she felt that right
And loved us in our worst of times.
Hug of a jug!

So, when it tumbled on the floor,
Touching the chair which broke its neck,
Its hundred pieces lay quite still,
A desperate ruin on the deck.
Jug on the rug!

"There's nothing you can do with that."
The challenge came, "Just throw it out!"
But throw away those memories!
Of auntie's famous farmhouse teas!?
She poured fresh cow's milk from this jug,
Protecting it from children's hands
Made sure it centre-table stood,
Snatched it up with all the food
When uncle John lit up his pipe!
Jug in a fug!

But sadly now it's so misshape
It's really only half a jug.
Its spots don't match, and lip's no more.
New patterns painted on its sides,
In blobs of finger-printed glue,
With tiny fly pressed into one -
Bug in a jug!

It's really only half a jug,
There's not a lot of use for it.
It won't hold water or my tea
But mug or jug it's clear to me,
This pot is crammed with memory
Jug with a hug!

It's really not a proper jug;
It's really not a proper mug:
Jug or Mug
A conversation novelty
For all who may call by for tea.

Among the ruins - Hope of Resurrection

[Coverham Abbey in Coverdale, North Yorkshire was founded there about 1212. It closed in 1536 and has been a ruin ever since. 13th Century Coverham Church, built on a much older Christian site is in a beautiful setting close to the Abbey and by the river Cover, but is now redundant. A window in south west corner of the nave depicts a bible with the date 1538 - the Great Bible which was the first in the English language and ordered by Henry VIII to be placed/chained in every parish church in the land. It was largely the work of Myles Coverdale who is assumed to have spent his earliest years at Coverham.]

Broken walls; doorways without doors;
Tall windows open to the skies
And unimpeded views all round.
This secret place of silent praise
Where blackbird's chatter cuts the air;
Where brothers laboured in their fields
And fished still waters by the stream.

But that was long ago ... and now
The abbey sleeps with troubled dreams
Of waste, destruction and decay
This fertile house where saints were grown;
Where white robed monks sang praise to God,
Lifting their echoing chants on high.
Among high arches raised in majesty.

Here where the lure of lands and wealth
Brought sword and cannon power to play;
Squeezed out the gentle love for Christ
And lords religious in their turn
Surrendered faith to rite and ritual.
These stones were sold - heard prayers no more.

True faith can never be suppressed -
It lives again in souls re-born.
Close by the stone set in a lawn
Just where the great high altar stood,
A yoke-yellow dandelion
Lifts its head in sunshine glory -
Witness to a resurrection.

Close by, the old stone church stills stands -
Redundant - seldom prayers are said.
A monument - yet not a ruin -
A witness to a faith once live
Deep in the heart of life lived here,
Tending the land all seasons round.

Gone is the praise of yesterday;
Silent the ground of souls at peace.
Now in the church a window glows;
With south west light a date comes clear;
The year God's word, unchained, was freed
For all to hear of faith and love
Of mercy, truth, of grace and joy.

A seed was sown here in a child,
Then nurtured like a kindling flame
Fired to a passion for his Lord –
For Gospel truth to be restored
And clearly read by all abroad.
Here, began a resurrection.

Snug, beside an ancient grave-curb –
Almost forgotten, resting tomb –
Broken stone of yesterday –
Tale-telling letters flaked away
By winter frost and gale-flung rain;
A single ball of fresh white wool;
A new-born lamb sniffing the air,
Warm in the sunshine's low Spring rays.
Here, where yew trees, eternal green,
Watch with the dead as signs of hope,
A mother's birthed her little lamb
Who, lifting now its bleating cry
Hears a reassuring answer
Called from the meadow closely by,
Lays down its head and rests secure
In this place of resurrections.