

Poems of T. E. Brown
(Manx Authors. Year 11 and over)

D10

Walter Kennaugh Trophy

Own choice. Time limit 5 minutes. Dialect optional. A selection of possible texts follow, but a vast selection is available in the Collected Poems.

Dedication to the Fo'c's'le Yarns, First Series

by T. E. Brown

To sing a song shall please my countrymen;
To unlock the treasures of the Island heart;
With loving feet to trace each hill and glen,
And find the ore that is not for the mart
Of commerce: this is all I ask.
No task,
But joy, God wot!
Wherewith "the stranger" intermeddles not –

Who, if perchance
He lend his ear
As caught by mere romance
Of nature, traversing
On viewless wing
All parallels of sect,
And race, and dialect,
Then shall he be to me most dear.

Natheless, for mine own people do I sing,
And use the old familiar speech:
Happy if I shall reach
Their inmost consciousness.
One thing
They will confess:
I never did them wrong,
And so accept the singer and the song.

“the beauty of the thing when childher plays”

from Betsy Lee

by T. E. Brown

Now the beauty of the thing when childher plays is
The terrible wonderful length the days is.
Up you jumps, and out in the sun.
And you fancy the day will never be done:
And you're chasin the bumbees hummin so cross
In the hot sweet air among the goss,²
Or gath'rin blue-bells, or lookin for eggs,
Or peltin the ducks with their yalla legs,
Or a climbin, and nearly breakin your skulls,
Or a shoutin for divilment after the gulls,
Or a thinkin of nothin, but down at the tide,
Singin out for the happy you feel inside.
That's the way with the kids, you know,
And the years do come and the years do go.
And when you look back it's all like a puff,
Happy and over and short enough.

“in the cow-house”

from Betsy Lee

by T. E. Brown

Well, winter come, and then the cows
Was goin a milkin in the house.
And if you want peace and quietness.
It's in a cow-house you'll get it the best.
For the place is so warm, and their breath is so sweet,
And the nice straw bedding about their feet.
And hardly any light at all,
But just a dip stuck on to the wall.
And them yocked1 in the dark as quiet as ghos'es,
And a feelin for each other's noses.
And, bless me! sometimes you'd hardly be knowin
It was them, excep' for their chewin and blowin.
Aw, many a time I've felt quite queer
To see them standin so orderly there.
Is it the Lord that makes them so still?
Aw, I like them craythurs terrible!
Aye, aye! the sea for the leks of us!
It's God's own work (though treacherous!);
But for peace and rest and that — d'ye see?
Among the cows is the place for me.

“Now, Tommy was as shy as a bird”

from Tommy Big Eyes

by T. E. Brown

Now, Tommy was as shy as a bird:
“Yes” or “No” was the only word
You’d get from Tommy. So every monkey
Thought poor Tommy was a donkey.
But — bless your sowl! — lave Tommy alone!
He’d got a stunnin head of his own;
And his copies just like copper-plate,
And he’d set to work and cover a slate
Before the rest had done a sum:
But you’d really have thought the fellow was dumb-
He was that silent and bashful, you know;
Not a fool — not him — but lookin so.
Ugly he was, most desperate,
For all the world like a suckin skate.
But the eyes! the eyes! Why — blow the fella!
He could spread them out like a rumberella —
You’d have wondered where on earth he got them
Deep dubs of blue light with the black at the bottom —
Basins of light. But it was very seldom
You could see them like that, for he always held them
Straight on his book or whatever he had,
As if he was ashamed, poor lad!
And really they were a most awful size;
And so we were callin him “Tommy Big-eyes.”

Dedication to the Foc's'le Yarns, Second Series

by T. E. Brown

Dear Countrymen, whate'er is left to us
Of ancient heritage –
Of manners, speech, of humours, polity
The limited horizon of our stage –
Old love, hope, fear,
All this I fain would fix upon the page;
That so the coming age,
Lost in the empire's mass,
Yet haply longing for their fathers, here
May see, as in a glass,
What they held dear –
May say, “'Twas thus and thus
They lived”; and, as the time-flood onward rolls,
Secure an anchor for their Keltic souls.

“Middens is middens”

from The Doctor

by T. E. Brown

And then an ould fisherman got up
(I believe he had a little sup),
And strooghed the hair, the way with them chaps,
And a little spit and a little cough perhaps —
And says he, “The whitewash ‘ll do very well —
But middens is middens, Masther Bell!”
He says. Aw, bless us! the laugh that was there!
“Middens is middens!” Aw dear, aw dear!
Billy Sayle they were callin him,
But he was never gettin no other name
After that but “Billy the Midden.”
And they wouldn clane them; and they didn’!
And of coorse they were right! What nonsense — bless ye!
Them docthors, they’re fit enough to disthress ye!
Capers! What’s more comfortable
Till a midden about a house, if you’re able
To have a midden, and keep it nice.
And anyways dry? And think of the price
Of dung and potatoes? You can’t do without them;
And how will you be doin about them
If you havn’ a midden! Chut! they’re clever,
But hasn’ the smallest notion whatever
About dung — not them! And as for the stink —
A midden needn’ be a sink!
Trim it nice upon the street,
And a midden ‘ll smell as sweet as sweet,
And very wholesome. I know it depends
Altogether on who attends
To the lek, and careful in the spreddin;
But of coorse a man ‘ll be proud of his midden.

Envoy / Go Back!

by T. E. Brown

But now
From the brow
Of old Skiddaw, high-perched
On the last of the cairns,
Myself and my bairns,
We searched
For our sweetest of sweet little Hesperids;
And our lids
Were stung
By the "saut"
Sharp slung
From the wall
Of a squall,
That wrought,
And blurred,
And slurred
The air
Out there,
So that naught
Of our Isle,
The while,
Could we see,
But a film of the faintest ivory.
Just half-way down the slope we sit, –
When, suddenly, the sky is lit –
Look, look I as through a sliding panel
Of pearl, our Mona! Has she crossed the Channel
For us? that there she lies almost
A portion of the Cumbrian coast?
Dark purple peaks against the sun,
A gorgeous thing to look upon?
Nay, darling of my soul! I fear
To see your beauty come so near –
I would not have it! This is not your rest –
Go back, go back, into your golden West!

Clifton

by T. E. Brown

I'm here at Clifton, grinding at the mill
My feet for thrice nine barren years have trod;
But there are rocks and waves at Scarlett still,
And gorse runs riot in Glen Chass – thank God!

Alert, I seek exactitude of rule,
I step, and square my shoulders with the squad;
But there are blaeberries on old Barrule,
And Langness has its heather still – thank God!

There is no silence here: the truculent quack
Insists with acrid shriek my ears to prod,
And, if I stop them, fumes; but there's no lack
Of silence still on Carraghyn – thank God!

Pragmatic fibs surround my soul, and bate it
With measured phrase, that asks the assenting nod;
I rise, and say the bitter thing, and hate it,
But Wordsworth's castle's still at Peel – thank God!

O broken life! O wretched bits of being,
Unrhythmic, patched, the even and the odd!
But Bradda still has lichens worth the seeing,
And thunder in her caves – thank God! thank God!

The Pazons

(an extract)

by T. E. Brown

You can't be married without a Pazon? Can't I though?

Can't I, Masther Crow?

Give me the chance: I'm a married man with a fam'ly comin',

But if it plazed the Lord to take Mrs. Creer, d'ye think there's a woman
'd refuse to go with me before the High Bailiff down

At Castletown,

And ger' a slick of matrimony put upon us?

Honest?

Yes, honest thallure: *but holy, "holy matrimony," they're say'n' –*

Holy your grandmother! – At laste, I mane,

And astin' your pardon, Mrs. Clague!

But the idikkilis people is about the lek o' yandhar – Aisy with your leg,
Masthar Callow; thank ye! that'll do –

Yis, Mrs. Clague, and crizzenin's and funarls too –

Shuperstition, just shuperstition, the whole kit,

Most horrid, just popery, clane popery, that's it –

Aye, popery and schamin' and a lie and a delusion and snares

To get money out of the people, which is the Lord's and not theirs!

Money, money every turn,

Money, money – pay or burn!

And where does it come from? I said it before, and I say it again,

Out of the sweat of the workin' man,

Aw these priests! these priests! these priests –

Down with them, I say. The brute beasts

Has more sense till us, that's willin' to pay blackmail

To a set of rascals, to a pack of – Good evenin', Pazon Gale!

Good evenin', sir, good evenin'! Step up, sir! Make room,

Make room for our respected Vicar – And may I presume

To ax how is Mrs. Gale, sir, and the family?

Does this weather agree –

Rather damp, I dessay! And the Governor's got knighted?

I'm delighted to see you, sir, delighted, delighted