

Poetry Series

Jack Growden

- 25 poems -

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Jack Growden (1997)

A young aspiring poet and writer and student of Townsville Grammar School. I write on a variety of different topics. Please enjoy, and be sure to rate and comment! ! My most popular poems to date (15/Oct/13) are 'The Willow', 'Autumn Leaves', and 'Down By Mavers Hill'. Again, I encourage you to read and rate them, and comment as you see fit.

I also recommend George Price of England. He is a young poet who writes in a similar fashion to me. I encourage you to view his collection: <http://www.poemhunter.com/george-price/>

Works:

Seasons of Sentiments (2013)

Autumn Leaves (2013)

Alas, it has been a season of yawns and weary sighs,
Each and every morning met with dreary eyes;
The sluggish shuffles; the weight of the world upon;
Several moons have waned since hope has shone.

Far too many dawns have passed, it must be confessed,
Which have been welcomed without an inkling of zest.
All that remains is a grim incessant strain
As you see all your vigour trickle down life's drain.

It is now you have a choice: shed a tear and cry
Whilst watching your spirits languidly die,
Or take the deepest of breaths and roll up your sleeves
And begin sweeping away this gaunt autumn leaves...

Choose the latter, I implore, for it is the one that revives,
And remember how ever slow she may be, Spring always arrives!

Jack Growden (C) 2013

Jack Growden

Beneath One Sky (2013)

Beneath One Sky (2013)

The boys on the beach
Feel the sand between their toes,
And sunlight on their shoulders.
They have spent the summer
Playing with close mates
And scaling granite boulders.

Under the same sky
Children scurry through a street
Strewn with metal and bricks.
They have spent the winter
Starving in sheer fear,
As skinny as thin cue sticks.

Their mother whimpers
As her eldest writhes and bawls,
Tormented by his lesion.
He spent all of autumn
Exposed to the war
That has ruined the region.

A mother watches
Her daughter squirm and giggle
While she plays with her father.
They have spent all of Spring
Together as one;
Beneath the sky we'd all rather...

Jack Growden (C) 2013

Jack Growden

Brelles - French Version (2013)

Brelles (2013)

C'est un ville, où tous les rêves des hommes sont produisent,
Et ce ville s'appelle Brelles.
Un mirage merveilleux sur les sables arabes,
Assez le contraire d'enfer brûlant.

C'est un endroit où toute la fortune rencontre
Où l'histoire ne répété jamais.
Où les châteaux splendides avec les fenêtres de diamant
Border les rues marbres.

Les telles terrasses élaborent dans quelques boulevards larges
Que les paons flânent sur à la nuit.
Duquel les plumages chics vaciller et danser,
Sous un clair de lune rutilant.

Les tigres Bengalis enjoués rôdent chaque ruelle,
À côté des femmes qui vendent les sucres et l'épice.
Parce que ce ville est un de loin trop pas beaucoup,
Où assez bon ne suffit pas.

Donc, n'hésiter pas à tout
Commencer la recherche pour où nous résidons,
Parce que la fortune privilégie ces qui est gras
Et cherche leur destin ici à Brelles...

Jack Growden (C)

Jack Growden

Brelles (2013)

Brelles

2013

There is a city where all man's dreams take shape,
And this city is known as Brelles.
A wonderful mirage set on Arabian sands,
Quite the opposite of fiery hell.

It is a place where all of fortune gathers;
Where history never repeats.
Where splendid mansions boasting diamond windows
Line the marble streets.

Such terraces evolve into broad boulevards
That peacocks traipse over at night.
Whose glamorous feathers flicker and jive,
Beneath a gleaming lunar light.

Vivacious Bengal tigers prowl every lane,
Beside ladies selling sugars and spice.
For this town is one of far too few
Where "good enough" does not suffice.

So please do not hesitate in the slightest
To begin the search for where we dwell.
For fortune favours those who are bold
And seek their destiny here in Brelles...

Jack Growden (C)

Jack Growden

Caged (2013)

PROLOGUE

He's awake at first light
After a salacious night
Of desperate disloyal lust...
With a lay-down misère
He takes his share
And stalks off in bitter disgust...
The neon lights of downtown
Oh the slipping of her gown:
All are flashes through his mind.
Her curves so smooth and sweet
Gave an offer too neat,
Though he really should have declined...

THE STORY BEGINS HERE...

Nigel was a middle-aged man
With the average sedan
And children to a big-note wife.
He had more than most
But little to boast
In his dull nine-to-five life.
When he finally snapped
Over being so trapped
In his wife's domineering spell,
He broke through the chains
And dispelled the restrains
Before heading off to raise some hell!
Though his memory was mere
He can recall quite clear
The first few hours of his plight:
At a casino or two
He bided adieu
To the many dollars with which he'd been so tight.
It took him the barest of time
To blow every penny and dime
That he'd earned over the past few years.
Each nickel and cent
Was gleefully spent
On a sea of lagers and beers...

When it all had been lost
At an appalling cost
He stumbled towards the bar.
Though his speech was slurred
And his vision quite blurred,
He spotted a blonde well above par.
Her European thighs
Caught his eyes
So he swooped in for the kill.
Many years had passed
Since he'd felt it last:
This naughty, flirtatious thrill.

Though far from sleek
He was by no means meek
And was quick to ask for her name.
She responded with a grin
Which was riddled with sin
And so began their flame...
Captured by her "charm"
He took her by the arm
As they raced upstairs instead.
Their journey was succinct
And before he blinked
They were lying together in bed...

Without a thought of his oppressor
He proceeded to undress her
And her body did well to amaze.
She was twenty years his youth
So to tell one the truth
The rest of his night is a total daze...

Laying on the couch
In a hungover slouch
Nigel is in a mess, pondering his thoughts.
He sat there for an hour
The mood ever sour
When he glanced down at his quartz.
It's twenty to nine:
Time to get back in line
And head off to dreary work.
Time to walk the same floors
And get through his chores
That for one night he'd managed to shirk.

EPILOGUE

It struck him how soon he had reached the age,
At which he was trapped in his wife's nightmarish cage
For a single night he'd felt youth again,
Before being leeches back up on the short choker chain...

Jack Growden (C) 2013

Jack Growden

Dearest Nelly (2013)

Dearest Nelly

2013

Dearest Nelly,
Grey is your coat,
Smooth and sleek
Paying high on the tote.

We're on the punt,
We've been down all night,
But race eight is here
There goes the red light!

Roaring out of the pink box
You're straight in the hunt.
That bloody favourite
Has snuck in front.

But not for long,
For you're closing in fast.
So don't stop now
Nelly, keep racing past!

Mere seconds remaining,
There's just the straight to run.
Please dearest Nelly,
We need this one!
Oh Nelly you've won it:
The hounds' war of all wars.
You carried us to heaven
Like an angel with paws.

In our darkest hour,
You sent us fair into the black
So dearest Nelly,
You're our queen of the track!

Jack Growden (C) 2013

Jack Growden

Down By Mavers Hill (2013)

Down By Mavers Hill (2013)

So down by Mavers Hill
There's a backward kind of place.
A tiny forgotten blemish
Upon Melbourne's glamorous face.

It's a quaint little pub
Serviced by a single bloke.
And its people are the used up,
The down-on-their-luck kind of folk.

Taking a seat at the bar
Is a man who hopes this joint,
Will wrench him from his misery,
Though it never ceases to disappoint.

He dreams it will gift him another shot
At that insurance-vending game,
Which left him devoid of his children
And with an eighty grand debt to his name.

He comes here in hope it will change things,
But deep down he knows it never will.
So he takes a seat at the bar,
And hands over another bill...

Taking aim at a few trebles
Upon a dartboard across the room,
Is a footballer who'd made it,
Before his knee brought about his doom.

At merely twenty-four what has he now
But the memories of his glory days?
So he languishes around this deadbeat bar,
Recalling his coach's old plays.

And he believes this place will change things,
Set them right, though it never will.
He's just a torn-apart, burnt out star
Clinging on to those treasured days still.

These men are far from a few
Who call this rotten pub home,
Who've lost it all and wasted away
Over frothy lagers and spilt foam.

Because they come here in hope it will change things,
But deep down they know it never will.
Though they find a rare bizarre solace
In the pub down by Mavers Hill...

Jack Growden (C) 2013

Jack Growden

Driftwood at Sunset (2013)

Driftwood at Sunset (2013)

Far abreast of distant moored-up boats
The quiescent air engulfs each lung.
You taste briny salt upon your tongue;
As without haste, nonplussed driftwood floats,
While the owl's elegy is grimly sung
And waves give resonance to her notes.

Such monotony is the sunset norm
With a warning whispered by the breeze—
The driftwood was once one of those trees
Standing, whose sap ran vivid and warm.
He, whose trunk stood against the gales with ease,
Is now reduced to decrepit form.

Hear him cry out advice you should heed
Well before you too suffer his fate.
Trust him, for your vigour will abate
As age and death will never concede.
Hence achieve your wishes and do not wait
Until you are frail and rusty-kneed.

Jack Growden (C) 2013

Jack Growden

Escaping Port Arthur (2012)

Escaping Port Arthur (2012)

I had lived a pleasant life,
With my future perfectly planned...
But after a swig of whiskey
And one theft too risky,
I found myself here, in Van Diemen's Land.

How could I describe this place?
Well...at perhaps the loneliest corner of the map,
Was a labyrinth of stone
With many a moan:
The Empire's firmest trap.

Six months it had taken me to get here,
To this cruel and awful hovel.
And in all of my dreams
I've thought up so many schemes
That I could probably write a novel!

Yet still to this day I remain in prison,
Toiling away on the Englishmen's plains.
But I think at last I have created
The plan I've long awaited,
Which will get me out of these abominable chains.

Jack Growden (C) 2012

Jack Growden

Fletcher (2013)

Fletcher (2013)

My nephew Fletcher, from this line,
Heed these words, wise words of mine.
I am your uncle, so trust me hence
Even if you think I make no sense.
For I have lived longer; seen more than you,
Thus let my lessons on life duly ensue.
Now no doubt you've worked out your uncle's a poet,
So take his advice and don't simply blow it.
As my poem is more than just words that rhyme,
But rather lessons that have long withstood time.
Alas, I best move on with greater haste
For time is of the essence and not ours' to waste!

Firstly, be brave and flamboyant; don't follow others,
And please avoid women with big older brothers!
Remember to be calm; stay patient with girls.
Don't waste your precious money on buying them pearls.
Instead, invest in a collie, and keep him near
As he'll stay by your side until the end is here...
Now! When it comes to football, value your kicks
And watch out for old blokes' dirty tricks.
On the field and in life you will grow up fast,
Thus treasure each moment; don't dwell in the past.
While friends will be lost, family stays true,
So mate, rush to my aid if I'm in a big blue!

However, enough of the laughs, it's time to talk straight
Before you suffer a familiar lonesome fate.
Of course, I have much more to say
Though just only last note I've reserved for today:
Love your mother; that's more important than all.
For before you were fit and proud and tall
She bore you life from her breast,
Taught you to speak and how to get dressed.
Hence cherish her presence and treat her so kind,
As you owe her more than can possibly be mined!
So good luck mate, go forth with zest,
And Fletcher I promise, you'll soon learn the rest.

Jack Growden (C) 2013

Jack Growden

Journey Throughout The Empire - Part 1 (2011-2013)

Jack Growden (C) 2013

PRELUDE

The year was 1896. Her Majesty Victoria had reigned for just shy of fifty-nine years. While she was surely looking over her world map dominated by warm pink, I had just signed my name at the bottom of my most recent manuscript. "James Patrick Middleton". Slipping it with meticulous care into an envelope, I began to be encumbered by a horrid feeling which had become a far too familiar to me. It was the feeling that my latest piece of literature, to which I had spared the last six months of my life working on, was going to fail like the last dozen. Unfortunately I had the pitiful feeling that this work, like its countless predecessors would end up withering away at the back of my household bookshelf. What a waste...Engulfed with frustration, I stood up and walked across my cluttered study, staring at a piece of paper which had become an obsession of mine as of late. It read:

EXPLORE YOUR NATION'S GLORIOUS EMPIRE! JOURNEY TO VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA ABOARD THE MAITLAND.

LEAVING FROM SOUTHAMPTON, MARCH 31ST 1896.

Today was the twenty-seventh. I was locked in deep thought. My marriage was teetering on the edge of a cliff staring in collapse. My career as an author had failed, there was no point denying it. I hadn't been out of Mother England in all my thirty-four years. All I was doing was gradually heading for my grave. I punched my desk with rage. It was so simple: I needed a change in my life. Either I headed for the filthy repugnant factories and sweatshops of London, or I headed to Southampton where a new start in life was tied up at the quay. I knew there was no comparison between the two.

By March the thirtieth I had reached Southampton, leaving my wife with an honest letter, enough sterling to keep her alive for a year and each and every one of my failed manuscripts which were paper relics of my miserable past. I was moving on, turning a page, and for the first time in about five years, I was excited...and most importantly I was happy. The feeling of joy and glee had long denied me. I barely slept that night. From the moment I settled in aboard the Maitland, I whipped out my fountain pen- the most prized of my possessions- and recorded my experiences in a literal style I hadn't yet tried. My new life chapter had begun, and I was excited. Vancouver was mine to explore after ploughing across the "blissful seas of the Atlantic" and wondering about in Tenerife, Rio de Janeiro and Lima! I neither thought about nor cared how long I would stay in British Columbia. I wasn't even sure if I'd come back. I was convinced that it could be my last night in Mother England. Being a melancholy writer, usually an advent such as this would lead me to sentimental ponderings, but not this time. The motherland had been cruel to me; it had aged me and given me nary an opportunity in life. I pondered no regrets as I bid farewell to her that night.

I awoke the next morning at the fifth hour, immensely eager to get sailing. I was packed and dressed and on my way to the harbour by half past five. It took me a further half an hour to find the wharf. Nevertheless there she was, the Maitland, in all her glory. A magnificent passenger vessel she was, perhaps ninety feet in length, her timber varnished to absolute perfection. I had read about her in my desolate study in back home in East Sussex. She was a veteran of the Atlantic, transporting passengers from the motherland to Cape Colony in southern Africa - her regular route. However, her sister ship, Belle, had recently fallen victim to the violent swells of Cape Horn, the one region I wasn't so keen to explore. As a consequence, the Maitland was recommissioned to the Southampton-Vancouver route. I had fallen in love with this ship the moment I first read about it, and hence for the next three hours, I wandered

around the quay gazing at her from all different angles. Yes, one could consider me an oddball. I had always been like that. At precisely the tenth hour of the thirty-first of March 1896, I left Great Britain, my wife and all my failures behind as the Maitland parted ways with the wharves of Southampton...My journey throughout the Empire had begun and so had the penning of my memoirs.

POEM BEGINS *****

From Southampton, the great English port,
Sailed a ship of the passenger sort,
To far-flung colonies of the empire,
On a wondrous journey that was set to transpire.
To Vancouver she was headed,
Within the passengers an excitement was embedded.
As they ploughed across the Atlantic
The sea whipped up its antic and
It swelled and it sprayed
In a violent tirade
That refused to cease
Until they encountered the peace
Of little Tenerife Bay.

What a simply delightfully stunning place,
The home of the prized Tenerife lace.
A true jewel of the once wide Spanish domain,
Which would be a joy to have under British reign.
The passengers desperately longed to stay,
But they were back on the water the very next day.
The seas that day rippled with grace,
As the Maitland surged on at a steady pace.
The wind collided gently with her sails,
In stark contrast to last week's gales.
The crew powered on without relent,
Until a fortnight later, they were truly spent.
And it was a relief to see,
What turned out to be,
The many coves of Rio.

Rio! The home of escorts, coffee and cigars,
And the violent hovels that were its bars.
It was said a man could drop his standards like an old mole's jaws,
The moment he hit this town's shores.
The men certainly enjoyed their stop,
Judging by the endless stories they had to swap.
But it came time to leave and the men weren't keen,
As ahead of the boat lay an ominous scene.
There was thunder, there was lightning, there was rain to be found,
Directly up ahead where the Maitland was bound.
So the capt'n soon decided,
To wait until it resided,
At little Buenos Aires.

However by the end of the Argentine week,
The skies still looked woefully bleak.
But they could wait no longer, it was time to keep sailing,
Be it in glorious sunshine or incessant hailing.
So the Maitland stumbled south clinging close to land,
With the captain wary of the dangers at hand.
Out the portholes and windows hung craning necks,
While the fervent crewmen scrambled across the decks.
A fitful frenzy was about to be born,
As the seas became wild around Cape Horn...
Within hours the Maitland was listing from side to side,
Now helpless, at the total mercy of the tide.
Even the capt'n lost all hope in the ruthless plight,
As the mountainous coast dwindled out of sight.
And in complete disarray,
She floated further away,
Into the icy depths of the night.

In those gaunt twelve hours all I could do was pray,
And curse at my curiosity which had led me astray.
As I gently sipped on a bottle of rum,
I pondered the reasons as to why I had come.
I had heard my friends' optimistic opinions
Of our nation's many vast dominions.
So I had set out on a journey to visit such lands,
Guided by the Maitland's young and rugged deckhands.
But now I had given up, I was at the ocean's mercy,
Writing a grim farewell to my brother, Percy.
I surrendered to my bed, engulfed with fear and sorrow,
All the while praying for there to be a tomorrow...

After an evening of chaotic hell,
The bedraggled captain appeared tolling a bell.
In an instant, out scurried the dishevelled crew,
Their number had decreased by just a few.
The Maitland had survived at a bare cost,
And powered north seizing latitudes lost.
The Pacific that day was at a pleasant peace,
And the travellers' panic began to cease.
So it was with joy they made their way to the town,
That would keep them amused from sun-up til down.
The anchor was dropped,
And the nightmare had stopped,
As the Maitland tied up at Lima.

Lima! While the battered Maitland was being repaired,
There was nary a brothel being spared.
Just a number of days after losing all hope,
The passengers now took time to elope.
Wives at home were all but forgotten,
As the men's behaviour turned badly rotten.

Left behind onboard were all their morals,
Which were totally neglected in drunken quarrels.
The culprit was a magnitude of Peruvian ales,
Which drove all the men off the rails.
But it was angry wave goodbye that ended their spree,
As the Maitland upped anchor and headed back out to sea.

Excited I was to say the least,
That the tumult of the last week had finally ceased.
Huge swells and rough seas I had been made to endure.
But compared to others, my troubles were certainly fewer.
All the other men were fervidly stressed,
After they'd smashed Lima's brothels with reckless zest.
And now as the Maitland sailed past the Mexican coast,
The men on board felt little need to boast.
Before they reached Vancouver they had a dire mission.
To remove certain diary entries to annul suspicion.
Any mention of Lima, they were forced to erase,
As well as the women who made it such a "lovely" place.
Within days of anxious mental arrest,
They had succeeded; or at least tried their very best
By which time the destination was mere hours away.

When the passage to Vancouver came into view,
A great rush to the decks began to ensue.
As the Maitland entered the Juan de Fuca Strait
Nobody was listening to the barking first mate.
His orders were drowned by the murmurs of awe
And as hard as I tried, I could not find a flaw.
Colossal mountains capped in an alpine white.
A more amazing scene, I could not recite.
We sailed up a passage through a clump of isles
And now Vancouver was within twenty miles!
I paused, and remembered how far I'd travelled,
Preparing to farewell the ship where it'd all unraveled.
After suppressing a tear,
I stepped onto the pier.
And headed off on my new adventure...

With warm fur coating every inch of my skin,
I continued my search for an overnight inn.
When such a place became too hard to find,
I made a sudden and dramatic change of mind.
I borrowed a horse and headed to the north
My excitement brewing from the moment I set forth.
All around me were vast forests of maple trees
Whose pleasant scent made me sneeze.
I turned into the forest and nearly choked on my breath
As the sight that lay before me almost shocked me to death.
Half a mile ahead was the perfect place for a break:
A flat rock at the edge of a spectacular lake.
So I sat down to eat

And let the horse rest its feet.
Taking in the special view that lay in my wake.

Three hours it took me to eat my lunch,
After which I lumbered out of my languid hunch.
I climbed upon my patient steed
Which had waited rapturously during my scrumptious feed.
By dusk I had returned from the higher ground,
To the glorious settlement by the sound.
I chose to end the day in a cozy pub
Which appeared to be quite a popular hub.
I sat down to unwind, enjoying a quiet ale,
Eavesdropping upon quite an interesting tale.
The man who spoke represented Her Majesty the Queen.
And he recounted the places he'd recently been.
He boasted that he was off on a mighty new quest,
This time to the colonies across the Pacific, to the west!
He announced to the pub that he required some men,
Including one who was handy with paper and pen.
So I listened with intent,
Until I was fully in assent
That I would join this man on his voyage.

A week later I left at the hour six,
With a group of men who were an intriguing mix.
When the leader had announced this journey there was a rush to enlist.
And thus men from all walks of life were in our midst.
It would take a few months, but we'd eventually bond,
As together we'd venture across the oceans beyond.
When we reached the water I erupted with surprise and glee,
As the Maitland lay waiting for us by the quay.
I was delighted that we'd journey to the land of the White Cloud,
Aboard a vessel which would make any Englishman proud.
We departed British Columbia shy of half past nine,
Leaving behind the vast forests of maple and pine.
It had been a blissful stay
But we were on our way
To more wonderlands that lay abroad.

Miles upon miles across waters so deep,
Bored out of my mind, but I dared not sleep.
Just in case I missed something worthy of note.
Or an incident I could recall in an anecdote.
But there was nothing extraordinary; it was all the same.
And before Wellington many double-dozens of hours remained.
It was then I realised how the Empire was so vastly spread.
The sheer enormity of the distances strained my head.
It would rivet me when we'd pass some paradise isles,
But these only appeared every ream or so of miles...
We passed Hawaii, the Ellice Islands and New Hebrides as well.
And once we reached Fiji, my boredom began to quell.
So I picked up my pen

And started to write again
Until I reached the shores of New Zealand.

The Maitland found Wellington on Christmas Day,
Below overcast skies with a dash of grey.
From the quay to the town I took a classy tram,
Before indulging in a feast of local turkey and lamb.
It was then I first considered taking a look
At the island across the Strait that was named after Cook.
I knew my days here were numbered yet I couldn't resist,
When I gazed in wonder to the south, through the mist.
I was aboard the ferry, crossing the strait within the hour
Bound to a place I knew would be quite the inverse of dour.
With twenty miles to Picton came passage flanked by coves.
Which brought the excited tourists onto the decks in droves.
Blissfully we meandered through the splendid maze,
That was the deepwater channel through a series of bays.
It was an exquisite view,
But I hadn't a clue,
That I would see better in coming few days...

From Picton I journeyed swiftly to the south,
Most of the time boasting an open mouth.
Over rolling hills and beneath snow-capped peaks;
The sort of terrain every writer seeks.
In my carriage I described it on the mass of pages
On which I'd recorded my journey at all of its stages.
By late afternoon I'd reached Christchurch station,
And was on my merry way to a fabulous creation:
The Christchurch Cathedral in the splendid town square,
Which did well to evoke every writer's flair.
And so write I did rather avid and frantic,
In a style not nostalgic but rather romantic.
Every word I spelt
Described just how I felt:
I had fallen in love with another dominion...

But just like in Canada I had to depart,
For another colony that would capture my heart.
As the Maitland set sail across the Tasman Sea,
A rather grim thought came across me:
Seven months had elapsed since I'd written back home,
Except once to Percy, when the Maitland was lost in icy foam...
However my journey had changed since that was written,
So I detailed everywhere I'd been since Britain.
From Tenerife to here, I described it all,
In my messy and excited lengthy scrawl.
As well as recount I tried to inspire
My brother to explore our mighty empire.
It took me a while
Though many a mile
Still lay between me and Port Phillip Bay.

Within a fortnight we had reached the furious Bass,
And encountered fiery swells and sprays "en masse".
There were hazardous rocks and hostile reef
Which in the past had bought many vessels to grief...
There were birds too; the odd tern or gull,
Swooping around looking ever so dull...
Soon enough we entered the dreaded "Rip"
Which had become a graveyard for many a ship
As the channel itself was in need of a dredge
And the only help came from beyond the water's edge:
Two lighthouses helped us limp through the mess,
Battered and beleaguered, but nevertheless.
After a tiring morn
Of being tossed like a pawn
My feet graced the solid ground of Victoria.

By now I had heard, for it was common news,
That club named Fitzroy was playing the "Blues".
Hence I soon discovered that I was not alone
When crossing a bridge of freshly-cut stone.
As there were droves of pundits on their way to the ground,
A toothless few betting pockets of pound.
Through the crowded gates, they headed toward the fence
To watch each moment of the match which was intense.
Here I soon learnt to quell my colonial pride
As every pompous remark was met with a savage snide.
Nonetheless, I spent the following weeks relaxing,
For the past seven months had been quite taxing.
Thus I glumly confessed,
That to relish true rest
I would have to put the pen down for a while...

THE END OF PART 1
To be continued...

Jack Growden

Life and Chess (2010)

Life can be likened to a good game of chess
As white has always moved first,
And whilst kings have ruled without a cut on their hands,
Every pawn's life is cursed.

In life, some of us move sideways or backwards,
And many only know one way,
Such as the peasants and privates who run deadly straight
When they're hurled right into the fray.

Amongst people there are those who are unassuming
Like the bishops who snipe from afar.
And a player is sure to look both ways before crossing
Quite similar to a pedestrian wary of a car.

Life can be likened to a good game of chess,
As it's an art many struggle to comprehend,
A treacherous field upon which every effort and attempt
Is often met with a dismal dead end...

Jack Growden (C) 2010

Jack Growden

Midnight Fever (2013)

Midnight Fever (2013)

Those blue ink words
Upon that page
Spark the silent
Fits of rage
That cage
The beige:
That's mental clarity at that stage...

What does this mean?
Well one must be a teen
To comprehend
The message one does send –
Oh it will not mend
Tonight,
More than slight
Without the god given right
To sleep
To weep
For this dilemma's deep
So sleep!
Go sleep!

No words of wisdom could gift him content
So away in fitful sleep he went
Run ragged
Looking haggard
From the ballistic moment spent –
It's sent!
It's seen!
Up lights the screen
And fear and dread
Rips him from his bed –
She's sorry!

She's sorry...
Well then not to worry –
But sorry?
A farce it seems
From the girl of his dreams
It seems –

So don't believe her –
Fever!
Leave her, leave her
But do not grieve for her –
Fever!
Just leave her
Whilst you have the fever –
Fever!
The midnight fever –

So leave her...
Fever!

Jack Growden (C) 2013

Jack Growden

Mournful Lament (2013)

He was who he was, a beloved man,
Admired by all it now oddly seems.
For such sweet sentiments are being shared
And mournful tributes number in the reams.

Though I hold just a single grim regret:
That is that none of these kind words were said-
Not a word of praise; or affectionate phrase
Was ever uttered before he lay dead...

Jack Growden

Spirit of the ANZAC: Kokoda (2011)

Spirit of the ANZAC: Kokoda (2011)

Scaling across a mountain range,
That seems unfathomably steep.
Scurrying through the sodden trees,
Through mud that is knee-deep.
I was there with my mates to stop the Japs
From knocking on our mothers' doors.
We were there to stop the slanty-eyes
From breaching Australian shores.
And we were prepared to trudge,
Through the mud and slush,
If it meant we stopped the Japanese rush,
Which had rolled all in its way.

It seemed like only yesterday
I was strutting around Geelong.
When I traded in my guernsey for a uniform,
Sent to a place I didn't belong.
And the boots I used to kick for goals,
I traded in for heavier soles.
And with a khaki slouch hat upon my head,
I went off with my mates to the war instead.

I reached the New Guinean shores a few weeks on,
And was hurled straight into the fray.
The humid nights and lack of order,
Threw us all into disarray.
Mud and leeches invaded our shoes
And swept us off our feet.
Oh the sweat and rain, the mental strain
They almost had us beat...
But it would've taken more than that,
To knock us new ANZACS flat,
And force us to retreat!

When my best mate, Bill, kicked the bucket,
All us boys, we hung our heads.
We were tired of the blood and gauze,
And the putrid stench of the dead!
We were tired of our open wounds
And the Japs sniping from trees...
But it would take more than that
To knock us Anzacs flat
And bring us to our knees!

So we lumbered on with stale blood and sweat,
Day by day, forcing back that Japanese threat.
And we called upon that spirit of old,
Which we as Anzacs were proud to behold.
The same young men who were on all fours,
Just a few weeks on, drove the Japs off the shores.

Those very same blokes who were cast aside,
Turned the war around with their dogged pride.
The spirit of the Anzac now resides in all
Who rise to answer our proud nation's call.

Jack Growden (C) 2011

Jack Growden

The Angel (2013)

The Angel

2013

See here, the angel of this town,
A halo for her blessed crown.
With each year comes a fresh coat of paint
From the people to their strange old saint.

See here, the angel of this town,
Printed bold upon the orange and brown.
Haggard and worn but not lost of her face,
Refusing to yield her glorious place.

See here, the angel of this town,
Peering out beyond but never glancing down.
Tired and weary; windswept too
From the ocean breeze of the greenish blue.

See here, the angel of this town,
Who does not smile, nor does she frown.
For what is there to scowl about?
When one sees the world from her lookout.

Jack Growden (C)

Jack Growden

The Brutal Full-Back (2013)

In the goalsquare there stood a brutal full-back,
Hell-bent on ruining my day.
The siren blew, the usual nudges came,
But I was confident he would not stay.

After all, I had booted a ton of goals to date
And this bloke was only new to town.
Though I must admit some slight apprehension
Upon catching a glimpse of his savage frown.

By the end of the first quarter I'd had the barest of kicks,
And thus I trudged into the huddle feeling crook.
He'd worn me like a glove till now,
Slamming me with every trick in the book.

And so the day droned by and my score ran dry,
Next to that nastiest of blockheads.
I remember that day all too well,
Because the bastard cut me to shreds.

Jack Growden (C) 2013

Jack Growden

The Captain's Brutal Night (2011)

It was a Friday night in Roxby Downs, and the workers were drowning some ales.
With every drop of West End, they told taller and taller tales.
All of the workers were footballers; except for one who had to speak.
He introduced himself as a rugby bloke and called the footballers weak.

He strutted towards the dartboard and called the captain soft.
The champion's focus was maintained as he sent the dart aloft.
Spot on target he was indeed, winning with a measly double nine,
Turning his attention to the nuisance he exclaimed, "Mate, you've crossed the line."

The captain's brain was reeling; a brawl would not do,
To punish the man properly a challenge had to ensue.
They would charge at each other, from two-hundred yards astray.
The weaker man who lost, would be sent on his merry way.

The captain introduced the concept, and they strolled out onto the street.
The entire pub full of men stood on the verandah, stamping their feet.
They watched the opponents staring at each other, either end of the stash.
A quick wink from the captain, and they started with a dash.

The pest found out on impact that the captain was quite a load.
An incredible crash of broken bones and he was left seething on the road.
The captain swept up his winnings, he'd left the crowd in pure delight.
He looked up at the darkened sky, and roared triumphantly into the night.

Jack Growden (C) 2011

Jack Growden

The 'Chapel (2012-2013)

The 'Chapel'

When the clocks did chime for the eleventh hour
Well after the Sun had completed its fall,
The darkest of Whitechapel's darkest,
Staggered from an alley, in a hunched-over crawl.
With nary a moon to behold, light was scarce,
And t'was a lamppost that brought him into view.
Such a haggard mess he was indeed,
His teeth a bare yellow few.
A matted mane sat upon his face,
Which resembled a dead weathered stone.
And with his great age and repugnant figure,
It is no surprise that he lived alone.

Alone? Well not exactly:

Indeed, there was his trusty cleaver
Which was treasured by its deranged master
But dreaded by its receiver.
Its shiny blade gave off quite a glint
Congruent to that of its master's drooping eyes
Whose pupils were gaunt and sullen,
Shouldering the burden of sins, one would surmise...
Tonight appeared to be no different
For this ruthless, unmerciful pair,
As the master hobbled over the cobblestones
Bound for Mitre Square.

In this myriad of deceitful alleyways
Where whores and crooks did thrive,
And where shady deals ensued at every end
It was a bitter struggle to survive.
With its long memory and cellars of secrets
The 'Chapel was the Empire's lowliest place,
A tiny, well-hidden blemish
Upon Mother England's glorious face...
It was where the unwanted men of the lower class
Came to unwind after twelve hours working.
Though tonight would be no jovial affair
For the butcher and his cleaver were lurking.

The old disheveled hunter
Entered by means of the far eastern lane,
His wide, macabre eyes fixed upon the mob
As it gently began to rain.
Completely nonplussed by this change of weather,
He limped towards the obstreperous crowd.
And as thunder rumbled overhead,
The square had suddenly become quite loud.
Though the din did nothing to waiver his nerve,
And there remained a sinister gleam to his eye.
A heinous deed was about to take place
Beneath this ominous, lightning-lit sky.

Jack Growden (C) 2012/2013

Jack Growden

The Lucky Country (2010)

The mists of morning settle low
Upon Mt Gambier's Great Blue Lake.
Testing the limits of the naked eye,
It encompasses everything in its wake.

There's not a breath of wind across the plains,
As the trees refuse to sway.
The desert chill that marked the night
Will soon give way to the heat of the day.

Turning far away to the east,
A world apart from the Outback's roast,
The first few rays of glorious sunlight
Teeter brightly across the coast.

Flocks of magpies and kookaburras
Sound out the old stockmen's alarm.
On horseback the workers trot off
To toil upon their farms.

Hunting their prey down in the Bight,
Where the water stretches great miles,
Riding the sea are the tuna boats
Bringing home dinner with their various styles.

It's eight in the morning in Sydney
And the traffic has reached its peak.
Juggling papers and coffee and briefcases too,
A steady wage awaits by the end of the week.

Though they'd all rather be in paradise:
Strolling the beaches of the Gold and Sunny shores,
Where children bathe in crystal swells
Untouched by plague or imminent wars.

Far to the south and it's time for the game
Which divides this tiny Vic town.
Two thousand crammed into the country ground
To support their boys: the gold and brown.

Worlds away from Euroa it's beer o'clock
Amongst Darwin's sweltering heat.
Where men raise a toast to this lucky land,
For living Down Under was hard to beat!

Jack Growden

The Pointless Verse (2013)

The Pointless Verse (2013)

Languishing at the desk under a dreadful curse,
Just take me away now in the back of a hearse!
Encumbered with rage
I put pen to page
And make mindless scribbles instead...
In a violent scrawl
Of nothing decent at all;
I describe the scene of my head.
But like a stubborn trout
The words won't come out
And the harder one tries it only gets worse.
Until one is left with something like
This pointless little verse...

Jack Growden (C) 2013

Jack Growden

The Sweatshop (2011)

Ensnared in a plume, denied a pure breath,
Are vermin born into this vile caper,
Moaning in spite of the sweat and the smoke,
And pleading to part ways with the vapour.
Each beg goes unnoticed, falling upon deaf ears,
As the rats groan on they know it is in vain.
After all they were born and will surely die here,
One by two by three, under this brutal strain.

Assembly lines of skeletal faces,
Whimper, hunched double, yearning for a reprieve.
All the while dreaming with phantom hope
That one day they will find a way to leave...
Dusk is falling briskly, as light is now quite scarce,
And the traffic beyond has reached its peak.
Families outside would be enjoying their time
Whilst these vermin toil on, their futures frighteningly bleak.

Though until now not a single slave has dared to escape,
Not one in that huge room; in that vast number.
Except for one scoundrel with boundless courage
Who jolts awake from his long slumber.
No longer a filthy rat, but rather a man on a mission
He sneaks away, under the mask of the smoggy haze.
Crawling and slithering, he snitches his way to freedom,
Eluding his master's gaze.

With every inch he swindles his lifetime oppressor,
Each metre he lunges with upsurging zest,
Tasting the clean breeze which had long refused him
He makes one final thrust to freedom and rest.
Swamped by emotion, he climbs to a new life,
Catching one last glimpse of the dishevelled swarm
He whispers, "So long, " and continues on his merry way, until-
The wretched lord finds him, in his most vicious, venomous form.

Seizing his anguished prey but its repulsive bony ankles,
He bears him an icy glare of disgust.
Tossed back into horrific enslavement,
Life would never be just...

Jack Growden

The Willow (2013)

From a rolling hill in one green Essex field,
A splendid, sweeping vista was suddenly revealed.
Rays of sunlight appeared marking the advent of dawn,
Invigorating the gully below on this placid morn.
The autumn calm was quite crisp, but pleasantly mild,
As I drew a deep breath and simply smiled...

Ambling down the path that led to the glen below,
I caught the gentle scent of an English meadow.
Well-worn, the trail continued to meander
Through lush pastures of flowered oleander.
Towering modestly among stood the odd foreign teak,
Which by the tree further on was made to look rather meek.

I recall he teetered upon the edge of a pond,
Whose lily-clad surface stretched into the mists beyond.
Dull grey skies gave way as the Sun did soon prevail
As I laid basking in the light at the end of the trail.
In the broad shade of that willow I sat down to drink
And with an instant haste began to think.

In a peaceful dreamy haze I pondered it all
Beneath the weeping willow, graceful and tall.
A half hour passed until I gazed up in awe
And tumbled into an admiring stupor.
For here hung this giant that seemed tired and run down,
His haggard branches bearing a beleaguered frown.

Though whilst his leaves dipped, defeated, below the waterline,
I stared deeper and found a core quite sturdy and fine.
By peering past the crinkled bark and stale sap,
One is soon convinced that he will never snap.
For with resilience at heart, he refuses to yield:
That mighty old willow of that green Essex field.

Jack Growden (C) 2013

Jack Growden

Until the Lake Ran Dry (2011)

Until the Lake Ran Dry (2011)

I awoke, sweating profusely, escaping from a snoring fitful sleep. All night my head throbbed with abrupt flashes of enemy choppers and humid, foul rainforests. Rolling off the once comfy couch, I sighed deeply. Today was going to be a very, very long day. My mind was abuzz with a thousand thoughts, all at once. Mainly, they were related to my son growing up without his father, my wife raising him without a husband, and my mother growing old without her son. With these vile thoughts jostling boisterously within my head, I turned on the radio that had served me many days. It soothed me immediately.

"...and Essendon ran out two goal winners against Collingwood yesterday--"

Well, at least something was looking up. I closed my eyes and began to listen to Bob Rose's review of the match, however a few seconds later I was interrupted by a warm sensation at my fingertips. It was Skip, my faithful canine companion of close to a decade, whining for his daily walk. Seeing as this would be the last time I would do this, I sprung off the couch with great energy. Five minutes later, I was out the door and at the park watching Skip bound after ball happily, without a worry in the world. The park had always been a great place for pondering my thoughts on life. On this dry autumn morning, there was nary a person around, so I had only my mind to keep me company. As I hurled the tennis ball across the park and witnessed Skip crazily pursue it, I wondered who would do this in my absence. My son was too young, my wife too busy and my mother far too old. I guess it meant old Skip would have to miss out altogether. At the thought of his disappointed face and his droopy tail, my eyes began to water. Somehow I found the strength to dam the flow of tears. It was just in time too, as a second later Skip was by my side, as he had been for so long. I did not want him to see me cry.

By the time Skip and I returned, the weir that had held my tears at bay was firmly intact once more. I left Skip in the yard and picked up the milk from the front doorstep. The Sun was well and truly out as I switched on my radio and blazed up a cigar, an essential part of my morning routine. I sat alone in silence, aside from the dreary murmur of the radio, for what felt like hours, lighting cigar after cigar until the tin was empty.

"Dad!" yelled my son, Brian, ripping me out of my Cuban stupor.

"Dad...my calendar...there's...there's no days left...does that mean...?" his young innocent face was screwed up in a look of pure worry.

"Yes, Brian." I began, tears once again teetering on the knife-edge that was my usually stable dam walls, "I am going away for a while mate."

"Where are--"

"Did you hear about Essendon?" I choked throatily, my eyes gradually drying up. "It was a good win."

Brian looked confused, but thankfully he obliged to participate in the new conversation. I could not bear for him to see me cry.

Half an hour later it came time for breakfast. My cereal went down rather raggedly and by the end of it I was feeling both very nervous and very sick. My family and I sat in a solemn silence throughout which I smiled feebly, gazing out the window. Even Brian, normally billowing with questions about everything, was quiet. It was as if he knew exactly what was wrong. My wife, Jean, kept glancing quickly at the clock for the time when I would have to have a shower and break this dreadful silence. At last that moment dawned.

"Lance." She whispered, jolting her head in the direction of the clock.

Clearing my throat, I had a shave and a shower with the profound feeling that it may be the last one I had for a while, and certainly the final one I would take here at home.

Soon enough, I was dressed in my AIF uniform and was heading out the door for the last time, after a shaky farewell with a rowdy Skip. Each step was taken in an invisible agony, which was binding me to my home of twenty wonderful, youthful years. But, after all, my country was calling me. I had to go. After an eternity, I made it to the car, wrenched the door open and took one last look at my castle. The dam wall was straining and small cracks were now appearing. Yet still, I held on, and no tears fell. We drove on past the park where I had begun to teach Brian how to play cricket. Memories of his first century, and the joy on his blessed face ran riot across my mind. Still, the tears did not flow. A few hundred yards down the road, we passed my footy club. I had had some of my most triumphant moments there; three hundred games for the mighty Tigers. To leave it all behind seemed awfully wrong.

The dam was now on the brink of collapse.

The floodgates were pleading to be opened.

I was shivering. I was shaking.

But nevertheless, the tears still did not flow. Next, the car turned a corner and directly in front of us was the dam buster: the church where Jean and I had wed. Instantly, the wall fell and each and every tear I had held back all day surged out like a tsunami.

Simultaneously, Jean leapt out of the now stationery car, pulled me out of the driver's seat, and took over the wheel, all the while without uttering a single word.

It took me the following five minutes to compose myself enough to stand up. By then we had arrived at the bus station. There stood perhaps two dozen other blokes and their families sharing the very same grief. It was over so quickly. My luggage was stowed on the bus. I gave my wife one parting hug and turned to my tiny son. He was my sole legacy.

"I'll be back," I mumbled softly, "don't you worry."

We were gestured towards the bus, I took four steps before wheeling around and delivered my final words to my son: "Make your life count son."

I longed to tell him more but I was ushered onto the Greyhound in an instant. I stuck my head out of the window and saw my family for the last time. I was no longer sad, but rather overflowing with guilt. I felt guilty for leaving Jean and Brian, my wife and son, with such a burden. I had left them in a deep lake of teary grief. It seemed wrong leaving them, the ones I loved so dearly in the exact situation that I was going to attempt to mend for the ones I feared. Though I cannot be sure, I am confident that I died that day.

That soldier, Private Lance Patterson (M.I.A.) was right. It was wrong for him to leave his family in such a state. Each hour the lake grew deeper. His wife was left to swallow the thought of her beloved husband leaving behind, all to fight a yellow man's war.

Jean Patterson laid on the couch in total silence, a fortnight after her husband's departure. Her tears had at last subsided and her eyes could see once more. She sat up straight, as if awaking from a two-week long slumber. She screwed up her face. Something was different. The dining room did not have the familiar, almost reassuring stench of cigar smoke that she once hated, but now so sorely missed. The room was silent. She leapt up to try and remedy these things only to discover that the tin was empty and she could not reach her husband radio which sat upon the highest shelf, dead without its master.

Her dam walls began to weaken but held their own as she sat down to have breakfast. She glumly poured cereal into a bowl and strolled over to the refrigerator. Then, she cursed at herself. Almost sprinting, she retrieved the several glass bottles of milk from the doorstep before hearing a noise which almost cracked her floodgates completely. Skip's gentle curious whimper echoed through her head. There was his disappointed face and his droopy face too, just as her husband had silently envisaged. He was sad

for the first time in fourteen years. Jean slammed the front door and raced up the stairs and into the bathroom. She looked in the mirror, breathing heavily, trying her absolute utmost not to cry. Her haggard, frantic face was strangled in emotion when she looked down to the water basin and saw the dead residue of her husband's shave. They stared back at her, shattering her dam walls. Jean collapsed in an instant. All day, she stayed there and cried and cried and cried, until she could cry no more; until the lake ran dry...

Jack Growden (C) 2011

Jack Growden

Victoria Hotel (2013)

One hundred and sixteen years have passed
And still the old Victoria lasts.
To this day the greens remain on tap,
And the same versed blokes meet to talk some flap.

Thousands of larrikins have strolled through the door
And thus the number of blues sits at eight hundred and four.
I reckon every good drinker knows this address,
After all, it's a ripper of a pub I must confess...

Perched upon one of the town's roughest drags,
It can be spotted from afar by three Aussie flags.
'Tis a renowned for its occasional brawls,
But primarily for the memorabilia hung on her walls.

Whilst the boast a pool table and blokes getting blind,
There's something special within that makes her one of a kind.
It is those characters who transform this apparently ordinary pub
Into the most popular and vibrant drinking hub.

It is my lone hope that
Whence a hundred and sixteen more years have passed,
The old Victoria will still last.
I pray that the greens will remain on tap,
And what's left of those versed blokes
Remain to talk some flap.

Jack Growden (C) 2013

Jack Growden