

Classic Poetry Series

Patrick Barrington

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

I had a hippopotamus

I had a Hippopotamus, I kept him in a shed
And fed him upon vitamins and vegetable bread
I made him my companion on many cheery walks
And had his portrait done by a celebrity in chalk

His charming eccentricities were known on every side
The creatures' popularity was wonderfully wide
He frolocked with the Rector in a dozen friendly tussles
Who could not but remark on his hippopotamuscles

If he should be affected by depression or the dumps
By hippopotameasles or the hippopotamumps
I never knew a particle of peace 'till it was plain
He was hippopotamasticating properly again

I had a Hippopotamus, I loved him as a friend
But beautiful relationships are bound to have an end
Time takes alas! our joys from us and rids us of our blisses
My hippopotamus turned out to be a hippopotamisses

My house keeper regarded him with jaundice in her eye
She did not want a colony of hippotami
She borrowed a machine gun from from her soldier nephew, Percy
And showed my hippopotamus no hippopotamercy

My house now lacks that glamour that the charming creature gave
The garage where I kept him is now as silent as the grave
No longer he displays among the motor tyres and spanners
His hippopomastery of hippopotamanners

No longer now he gambles in the orchards in the spring
No longer do I lead him through the village on a string
No longer in the morning does the neighbourhood rejoice
To his hippopotamusically-meditated voice

I had a hippopotamus but nothing upon earth
Is constant in its happines or lasting in its mirth
No joy that life can give me can be strong enough to smother
My sorrow for that might-have-been-a-hippopota-mother

Patrick Barrington

I Was A Bustlemaker Once, Girls

When I was a lad of twenty and was working in High Street, Ken.,
I made quite a pile in a very little while - I was a bustle maker then.
Then there was work in plenty, and I was a thriving man
But things have decayed in the bustle making trade, since the bustle making trade
began.
I built bustles with a will then, I made bustles with a wit,
I made bustles as a Yankee hustles, simply for the love of it.
I built bustles with a skill then, surpassed, they say, by none,
But those were the days when bustles were the craze, and now those days are done.
I was a bustle maker once, girls, many many years ago,
I put my heart in the bustle maker's art and I don't mind saying so.
I may have had the brains of a dunce, girls, I may have had the mind of a muff,
I may have been plain and deficient in the brain but I did know a bustle maker's stuff.
I built bustles for the slender, I built bustles for the stout,
I built bustles for the girls with muscles, and bustles for the girls without.
I built bustles by the thousands, in the good old days of yore,
But things have decayed in the bustle making trade and I don't build bustles any more.
Many were the models worn once; but mine were unique, tis said,
No rival design was so elegant as mine; I was a bustle maker bred.
I was a bustle maker born once, an artist through and through,
But things have decayed in the bustle making trade
And what can a bustle maker do?
I built bustles to enchant, girls, I built bustles to amaze,
I built bustles for the skirt that rustles, and bustles for the skirt that sways.
I built bustles for my aunt, girls, when other business fled,
But a bustle maker can't make bustles for his aunt when a bustle maker's aunt is dead.
I was a bustle maker once, girls, once in the days gone by,
I lost my heart to the bustle maker's art, and that I don't deny.
I may have had the brains of a dunce, girls, as many men appear to suppose,
I may have been obtuse and of little other use
But I could make a bustle when I chose.
I built bustles for the bulging, I built bustles for the lithe,
I built bustles for the girls in Brussels and bustles for the girls in Hythe.
I built bustles for all Europe once, but I've been badly hit,
 Things have decayed in the bustle making trade
 And that it the truth of it.

Patrick Barrington

The Diplomatic Platypus

I had a duck-billed platypus when I was up at Trinity,
With whom I soon discovered a remarkable affinity.
He used to live in lodgings with myself and Arthur Purvis,
And we all went up together for the Diplomatic Service.
I had a certain confidence, I own, in his ability,
He mastered all the subjects with remarkable facility;
And Purvis, though more dubious, agreed that he was clever,
But no one else imagined he had any chance whatever.
I failed to pass the interview, the board with wry grimaces
Took exception to my boots and then objected to my braces,
And Purvis too was failed by an intolerant examiner
Who said he had his doubts as to his sock-suspender's stamina.
Our summary rejection, though we took it with urbanity
Was naturally wounding in some measure to our vanity;
The bitterness of failure was considerably mollified,
However, by the ease with which our platypus had qualified.
The wisdom of the choice, it soon appeared, was undeniable;
There never was a diplomat more thoroughly reliable.
He never made rash statements his enemies might hold him to,
He never stated anything, for no one ever told him to,
And soon he was appointed, so correct was his behaviour,
Our Minister (without Portfolio) to Trans-Moravia.
My friend was loved and honoured from the Andes to Esthonia,
He soon achieved a pact between Peru and Patagonia,
He never vexed the Russians nor offended the Rumanians,
He pacified the Letts and yet appeased the Lithuanians,
Won approval from his masters down in Downing Street so wholly, O,
He was soon to be rewarded with the grant of a Portfolio.
When on the Anniversary of Greek Emancipation,
Alas! He laid an egg in the Bulgarian Legation.
This untoward occurrence caused unheard-of repercussions,
Giving rise to epidemics of sword-clanking in the Prussians.
The Poles began to threaten, and the Finns began to flap at him,
Directing all the blame for this unfortunate mishap at him;
While the Swedes withdrew entirely from the Anglo-Saxon dailies
The right of photographing the Aurora Borealis,
And, all efforts at rapprochement in the meantime proving barren,
The Japanese in self-defence annexed the Isle of Arran.
My platypus, once thought to be more cautious and more tentative
Than any other living diplomatic representative,
Was now a sort of warning to all diplomatic students
Of the risks attached to negligence, the perils of imprudence,
And, branded in the Honours List as 'Platypus, Dame Vera',
Retired, a lonely figure, to lay eggs in Bordighera.

Patrick Barrington