

Poetry Series

**Terry Dawson**  
**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**

2020

**Publisher:**

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

## Terry Dawson(1955)

Terry Dawson was born in 1955 to farming parents in the former British colony of Southern Rhodesia. He has been a soldier, game keeper, beekeeper and farmer. He lives now in rural eastern Zimbabwe.

# A Calf Is Born

On Simagogas ridge at dawn  
To elephant cow a calf is born.  
Renewal is a wondrous thing  
And all the clan stand round in ring.

The mother speaks:  
Who would rob me of my child  
The future leader of the wild.  
To elephants, kin is the word  
The sacred bond that binds the herd.

The calf speaks:  
And who would have me orphan be  
For my mother's ivory.  
Wild we, mother and I  
In wild, wild land of dry.

The elephants of the ring speak:  
Now this is the lore of the hefty grey  
The old ones mind as the small ones play  
And all things wild are our concern;  
The wise ones teach and the young ones learn.

Terry Dawson

# A Campaign Revisited

Africa once again was wracked with pain  
As warfare stalked the land  
And through the years of the copious tears,  
Few could understand  
That death and life in the time of strife  
Was purely a matter of chance  
Thrills were brisk; men took great risk  
As they danced that deadly dance.

It's a blazing hot day and who can say what the future holds in store,  
In the dust and the heat, a soldier's heartbeat marks the steady passage of time,

When approach in file at around one mile, terrs, and they number several score.  
Soldiers spot the advance and leaving nothing to chance, they swiftly deploy in a  
line.

A shot rings out; an anguished shout - a firefight thus began  
With so many guns blazing the din is amazing; it is a chaotic afray!  
Confusion all about, a cry and a shout, each must do as he can  
There's a strangled curse, a man falls to earth, he utters a cry of dismay.

A brief time the fight rages till the enemy disengages; melts away as thief in the  
night  
Of a sudden all is still, tally the toll if you will - casualties lie all about like litter.  
Bandaged, drip in arm, the cas-evac, pale but calm, is chopper-loaded for  
homeward flight  
Whilst on the ground fresh troops abound to carry anew the fight to the quitter.

Now let it be known of those who have flown: northward they go and with haste  
Pace quickened by fear, and far and near the bush beats to an urgent drum.  
They dare not slack or even look back; the hard fact must be faced  
That the peril at rear is in high gear to complete the work already begun.

Silent they pass through the golden grass  
Toward the sand pits of Miami  
On and on through the Longcut Pass  
And the air is hot and clammy

Seldom they pause for they have good cause to make haste; men are hot on

their trail

There's scarcely a breeze through the leafless trees; lack of rest starts to take its toll.

And then it comes where the Angwa runs that the chasers see those that they tail.

With pulses quick that follow-up stick hear blood in their ears like a thunder roll.

With a burst of speed, sufficient to need, the pursuers set out at the double  
Around on the flank near the left hand bank, unseen they bypass those they pursue.

They deploy on the ridge quite near to the bridge, and steel themselves for trouble

With the enemy near it seems quite clear that fell strife will surely ensue!

'Hold fire', breaths the sarge as the terrors loom large; 'I'll shoot when the time is right.'

There's a crack then a roar and, as the sarge soon saw, his plan had served him well

These terrors, they rue their fate but all too late for theirs is a terrible plight  
Over half are hit; there's no help for it - they flee, comrades left where they fell.

Let it be said that eight are dead; of the original twelve remain four,  
And this remnant band makes a desperate a stand in a hollow down by the river  
It is a time in hell and it doesn't end well for at last they fight on no more,  
A stark silence fell on that deathly dell, a silence to make bold men shiver.

Twelve spirits ascend by the river's bend and go to the place that all spirits go  
Silent they pass through the golden grass

Like the wind; it's quite uncanny.

On and on over the Longcut Pass

The air no longer hot and clammy.

Then heard at last, a kudoo-horn blast and they abide with their ancestors  
staunch

Limited no more as they were before; strange powers to them are born.

With their souls unfurled in the spirit world, they have it in their power to launch  
The dark powers of the night and the afterworld's might, against those that do  
not conform.

So let it be said for the sake of the dead

That war is a desperate affair.

Their lives are lost; it's a terrible cost

And who will in later times care?  
And win or lose, most would choose  
To palaver if given the chance,  
But never was it so, so off to war men go,  
There to dance that deadly dance.

Terry Dawson

# A Daydreaming Evoked By Swallows

The spring swallows return anew;  
I search for the elusive blue;  
Sky-riders of unequalled grace,  
Conjures to sight likeness of you.

My mind drifts now to far off place,  
While in my heart an empty space;  
An emptiness that will remain  
Till filled by woman's charm and grace.

And so my thoughts return again  
To the blue hills above the plain,  
Where resides one who is new hope  
To thirsting land of soothing rain.

A cottage stands upon the slope,  
Within a girl is making soap.  
Gardens there where white flowers grow  
Beneath trees hung with monkey rope.

Now this one thing I humbly know:  
All that I have I'd fain bestow  
Upon this one, that from it flow  
Chance of companionship's warm glow.

Terry Dawson

# A Dream

How lovely she looks by the firelight there  
Voluptuous woman with her raven hair.  
With beckoning finger: hey plowman draw near,  
In low loving murmurs she whispers his ear.

There's a furnace within her where great fire burns  
Her smooth skin glows hotly; a wonderment churns  
In heart of the plowman who grows in desire  
At the smoldering temptress who sets him on fire.

And into the cauldron unheeding they go  
United in rhythm as hot as it's slow  
Till dawn by the fire in mutual embrace  
The passion-spent plowman has sight of her face.

Terry Dawson



# A Hardworking Wind

Yesterday's bird-busy garden is gone:  
A hardworking wind got up in the night.  
A wind, to hear it, with much on its mind,  
Impatient of trifles; with much to get done.

Songless this morning the birds look out  
Upon a moody, unsure-of-itself dawn  
Beneath wet, rain-swollen clouds  
Hung low, rank on rank.

Even the bulbul, herald of dawn, is subdued  
The Heuglin, daybreak's minstrel, is dumb  
And high on his post, the lark holds his tongue.  
Distant thunder rolls about in the foothills.

Terry Dawson

# A Nursery Rhyme For Young Imperialists

Mzilagazi knew the way to spoil his brave ndunas' day  
Up in the hills to their dismay he'd throw them off the mountain.  
And his repute then fared and neared and old black raven he declared  
Mzilagazi is most feared, old man Dingane not countin'.

Then one called Rudd brought paper there; old Lobengula thought it queer  
And his great impis stand and stare at Rudd and his Concession.  
And then a thing that brought the dark, while in the tree-top sang the lark,  
Old Lobengula placed his mark upon the Rudd Concession! !

By wagon and horse the white man came through lands of wild tribe untame  
And ever since have borne the blame for bringing in great progress.  
Then in place where sets the sun a modern city was begun  
From where new nation was well run heralding a time of progress

At Bembezi please be assured the six pounders there loudly roared  
And kept at bay the heathen hoard turning the tide of battle.  
Lobengula northward fled, the Matabele nation bled  
Then when all was done and said the victor took the cattle.

Now Wilson led a light patrol, their mounts and speed gave them control  
But all of that was over-rolled; a tragic fate was dawning.  
Now back to back the valiant band faced the foe and made their stand  
And all the world will understand there followed time of morning.

~~~~~

Ambitious Milner, so we're told had eye upon the Jo'burg gold  
The plan was laid, the scheme was bold; said Rhodes, we'll simply take it!

Now Jameson raided the Rand, the raid did not quite go as planed.  
The Uitlanders failed to lend a hand and poor Jim didn't make it!

~~~~~

Great witch doctors they tried and tried - white numbers grew, the rains denied  
And furthermore the cattle died; it was a great disaster!  
The mediums they read the signs, they said of whites who dig in mines  
It's them who conjure these designs and cause us this disaster.

Our ancestors they bid us rise said wizened old Mlilo wise  
And all the whites will flee in cries, their bullets will turn to water!  
Now all the witches cry and shout, Mlilo's dead without a doubt,  
Shot through the heart by Yankee scout whose bullets weren't of water!

Now this is the plan we beautiful, upon the night the moon is full  
We'll slash and stab and burn and kill every single white man!  
In dark of night they stealthy crept then upon the sleeping leapt  
They slit their throats, the angles wept, this is the native war plan!

The scattered whites were scared and tense, but made a plan for their defence  
To Bulawayo all and thence into a hasty laager.  
The thing became a phoney war, the 'creep and pounce' would serve no more  
The rising stalled and that's for sure into a boring saga!

Over the tapping Morse key bent the hero Routledge hasty sent:  
The natives here are malcontent! Mazoe is in laager! !  
With dashing flair in martial art the daring colonel played his part  
He hasty made an armored cart; his name was Pennyfather.

Into the air a cheer was sent as down the road the colonel went  
To fix the ones of malcontent; eternal rest thereafter!  
And fast approached the dark of night as Salisbury's fortress came in sight  
For all about was great delight with cries and cheers and laughter.

The Shona nation on its knees, while hung from stout msasa trees  
Two witches turning in the breeze  
And peace returned thereafter.  
Now please attend this all concerned, this is the lesson to be learned  
That strife and war should both be spurned or bye bye life and laughter.  
Or -  
In peril's face by courage earned freedom from disaster!

Terry Dawson

# A Poem For An Eagle

Wildest of all the wild things  
Is the king of the hunting birds.  
Wild-one that to the wilderness clings  
Where the olden ways are preferred.

When mankind comes and with him brings  
His dogs and flocks and herds,  
A disquiet comes upon this king  
As though misstep's occurred...  
And at such coming spread his wings  
For wilds undisturbed.

Terry Dawson

# A Prayer At Dawn

When light has not yet paled the east  
I run for exercise  
Down moonlit bushveld path I go  
Beneath still stary skies  
Where dwell the creatures of the night  
(Darkness their realm of choice)  
They fill the air with many sounds  
Till sunrise still their voice

The exertion invigorates  
My body and my mind,  
Fresh, cold air invades my lungs  
As foot-falls rhythm find  
Then through the cool dew-scented air  
Comes rush of wind on wings  
As buzzard launches into flight;  
My heart with gladness sings.

Dawn's rays fall first on that high bird  
While beneath in dim light  
A treasureland of wilderness  
Is slow revealed to sight.  
As rising sun transforms the world  
Soft colours morph out of grey  
A spirit stirs within my heart  
And I am moved to pray -

Fill all my darkness with warm light;  
Illuminate the way  
Along the daunting path I choose  
To journey this new day.  
Sure-footed, steady stride be mine  
On my self-chosen trail,  
Let courage conquer quailing heart  
That points the way to fail.

Terry Dawson

# A Proposal

HIM:

Know this my love  
Your Lord above  
Gave you your strength to use  
And though you may  
For guidance pray  
Your path is yours to choose  
And trust your heart  
True course to chart  
Do not Will and God confuse

HER:

Who more than me  
My weakness sees  
I need His word as guide  
For I am frail  
And fear to fail  
Without God at my side  
My fickle will  
Uncertain still...  
These things I do confide.

HIM:

Now let me speak  
She is not weak  
Who feels temptation surging  
Yet does not bend  
For she transcends  
The lure of that call's urging  
And strongly goes  
Among such foes  
Victorious emerging!

HER:

The strength you see  
Comes not from me  
But from my God above.  
You poor lost troll  
Your questing soul

Knows not the way of dove  
For you don't see  
What's clear to me:  
The heart of God is love!

HIM:

Now hear you me  
While that may be  
There's more than that to you!  
The fact endures  
Free will is yours  
And you must use it true.  
Sweet girl of grace  
Will you make space  
Within your heart for two?

Terry Dawson

# A Stonecrossed Grave (A Poem In Remembrance)

Amid the mssas beside the hill  
A stonecrossed grave there is. It will  
Remind wayfarers of the dreadful cost  
To one who ventured, fought and lost  
To vanquish evil; alas it prospers still.

Now of the brotherhood who dared  
We are the ones that fortune spared  
Ours is the task to guard the gains  
And honour well the still remains  
Who fell when wickedness had reared.

And he at rest beside the hill:  
His sacrifice be with us still.  
Duty, honour, courage ever.  
Forsaken, lost, forgotten never.  
His unfinished task, ours to fulfil.

Terry Dawson



# A Sudden Waterfall

With quiet force along its course the river makes its way;  
Its waters ride through channels wide unceasing night and day.  
Its stealthy hush now thunderous rush as falling waters lunge  
And dazzling white in bright sunlight, the mist-veiled crashing plunge  
Where boiling foam comes roiling home down the rocky chasm  
Amid the roar I stand in awe of nature's mighty spasm.

Updrafted sprays in curling ways wets all the leafy verge  
As water drips from myriad tips where moss and waters merge.  
Below, like world forgot, a boiling pot has gouged a mighty pool.  
The fall-made pond is hung fronds shading the rippled jewel.  
While calming all, the charming call of liquid-throated frog;  
Blue butterflies and dragon flies adorn wet gleaming log.  
Now as by balm the waters calmed, obtaining grey-green gleam;  
With quiet force on level course the currents once more stream.

Terry Dawson

# A Tear In Her Eye

Through highland field a river streams  
Where aging youth is lost in dreams.  
In the lines of her face a story told  
Of flawless youth now over rolled;  
Of a dance of time that has waltzed by  
And the recall of it is a tear in her eye.

When fragile bloom has had its day  
Its beauty dulls and fades away  
But inward beauty which is pure  
Emits a shine that lasts the more,  
Like morning sun passed through the trees  
It has a glow that never leaves!

Terry Dawson

# A Tribute

As autumn slides to winter chill  
The westering sun sinks down below the hill  
Tilled at last the final rows  
The farmer turns and homeward goes.

Brother of ours, of our life part  
In whose chest beat noble heart;  
Who tilled the fields and reared the stock  
You bore the shield, you were the rock.  
But now your race of life is run  
Your long and winding road is done.  
And those along that road you met  
Beheld one tough and gruff, and yet  
Concealed from the glancing eye  
Of the casual passer by  
Lay mighty heart made rich by deeds,  
That valued work and knew of needs;  
Which in the pursuit of Right  
Shirked no trouble, feared no fight;  
A heart that many things forgave  
A heart that gave and gave and gave.  
Wholehearted he, without a thought  
Great-heartedly unknowing taught  
Bold lessons of life to sure inspire,  
Those wayfarers that quested higher.

But now  
As sunset's golden glow grows dim  
I look skyward and remember him  
Whose greatest crop is not yet grown;  
Who by his life-example has sown  
Strong seeds in hearts of men.

Terry Dawson

# Against Wrongs Done Me

Against wrongs done me  
My spirit raged  
Hatred-blinded, I do not see  
That lust for vengeance  
Keeps my spirit caged.

Calamities I wish upon my foe,  
In vivid dreams I see  
His fell afflictions grow and grow...  
In waking world I hate also;  
This thing, I can't leave it be!

All-demanding becomes my ire,  
Unstinting do I spend  
To fuel the all-consuming fire...  
But no fulfillment my heart finds;  
In downward spirals I descend.

Now unfurls a new design,  
Unscripted lines are spoken,  
Up-ending all cruel schemes of mine -  
As early death now stalks my halls;  
My olden ways are broken.

But spared from death, I behold  
The world in different light,  
New horizons promise gifts untold.  
Sunshine pours like healing balm  
Into my long, hate-filled night.

My renewed heart forgives now all  
Of him who earned my enmity  
Swiftly departs the darkened pall  
Of the all-overshadowing cloud;  
In that moment I am free!

Glad, unbound, my soul exalts,  
My spirit learns to sing  
Unencumbered by past faults,

Old fetters cast away,  
The crippled bird takes wing!

Terry Dawson

# An Empty Chair

A fierce respect we hold for those  
Who fall in battles glare,  
But different truth a family knows  
Whose feasts have empty chair.

An emptiness invades the gut  
All dreams and hopes turn cold  
And from the road into the rut  
When the grim news takes hold.

So daunting is the way to go,  
No self-reproach unsaid.  
Grief's hurts renewed at each cock's crow  
When ice creeps into bed.

The splendors of the breaking dawn  
Or sunset's wondrous lights  
No more inspire cold hearts that mourn,  
And beauty holds no delights.

Now two score years lie in-between,  
Yet grief's hurts still recur  
And dwell upon what might have been -  
All things that never where.

Terry Dawson

# An Old Bull Dies

In the month of October  
As dry as dust  
The elephants wait  
For the rain that must  
Descend from the heavens  
In life-giving pall  
When a million drops  
Of mercy fall.

But the drought is a harsh one;  
The vision is blurred  
And the dry takes a toll  
On the elephant herd.  
So a rugged old bull  
In thirsting's grim thrall  
Will answer the beckon  
Of the wild's last call.

Terry Dawson

# Baboons

Along that wild figs great bough  
The dog baboon advances now  
With nonchalant stride and easy pride  
As only baboons know how.

And in his calm, unhurried quest  
He pauses first to take a rest  
And have a scratch and then catch  
The morning sun as arrive the rest.

He knows that the sun-ripened figs  
Are borne on the most slender twigs  
And of his troop, the lighter group  
Fares better in those flimsy rigs

Clutching firm to the swaying limb  
He gathers ripe fruits close to him.  
And at leisurely pace he feeds is face,  
Working around the outer rim.

Presently when he's had his fill,  
His nonchalant air is with him still,  
With barking voice he takes his choice  
Of maiden fair and works his will.

And in his wild life divine  
He leans back in supine recline  
And boldly declares by the look that he wears:  
Lo, all that I behold is mine.

Terry Dawson



# Balance

In this life we bear  
In equal portion  
Mix dare  
With caution

At lightning speed  
Here comes Louise  
With scarce a heed  
Flying on the high trapeeze.

While shy of fire,  
Terry, treads with care  
Upon tort wire  
Tightly drawn  
A few feet in the air.

Terry Dawson

# Chances Lost

In early dawn before cock's crow  
I see in dream someone I know  
Some telltale trait alerts my gaze  
I feel a warmth inside me grow.

And I recall her winning ways  
As sunlight that on water plays  
And in her heart I had a place  
But fortune sent us different ways.

Now in half light I see her face  
My soul cries out for her embrace  
Stirred are desires, noble and base  
I want her all, I fear disgrace.

Terry Dawson

# Collaring The Elephant

Entranquiled by a darted potion  
Upon his bushheld range,  
The elephant's world is in slow motion  
It seems almighty strange.

Presently he falls down in slumbers;  
People rush to his side  
For they would track him as he wanders  
His range in easy stride.

And when his paraplegia clears,  
He is enhanced by tech  
For a transmitter now he wears  
In collar round his neck.

And by the means of this device,  
As all will surely guess  
The bearings, when they're measured twice,  
His whereabouts express.

Terry Dawson

# Courageous Girl (About A Blind Elephant)

Sightless wild giant  
Misfortune athwart her  
Resilient, defiant,  
Helped on by her daughter.

Born to the wilds  
The great matriarch sage  
Helped, cherished and guided  
In benighted old age.

So harken you humans  
Whose souls gold has bought  
And ponder what lesson  
This wild tale has taught.

Terry Dawson

# Double Standards

When wrong is done  
We must condemn,  
Prevaricate must none.  
When innocents are slain  
By truth we honour them.

Now we see unfurled,  
In clear and hideous light  
A double-speaking World  
Some wickedness is condoned  
Making darker darkest night.

Late the Double-standard learns  
As innocent blood runs deep  
That the fire both ways burns  
The pendulum knows but to and fro  
First forward, then back sweep

Terry Dawson

# Dry Wilderness (Or, The Gemsbok)

Proud antelope, monarch of sands  
Surveys Namib's hot, arid lands  
Beholding all with practised eye  
And veteran's heart that understands.

Such awful beauty draws a sigh,  
With aching hearts we wonder why  
Is made wild beauty so severe?  
The human soul begs make reply:

In wondrous wilds beyond compare  
Where passing traveler need take care  
For beauty and hazard dwell in twain...  
Yet blessed are they that linger there.

For wilderness, mountain or plain  
Bring damaged heart to whole again  
And you, proud beast with flowing mane  
May long your kingdom bear your reign.

Terry Dawson

# Flame Lily

Upon the bouldered kopjie's side  
A flower to stir a nations pride  
Borne on scrambling plant, a flame;  
Symbol of honour and acclaim  
To those who once the world defied  
In nation bearing Rhodes's name.

Terry Dawson

# For An Artist That Died

Stilled now is the capturing brush  
That marked the canvas taut  
By which the wild world's finest scapes  
As works of art were wrought

A sheltering tree has fallen down  
The forest is bereft  
Yet richer we that knew of you  
Though now our hearts are cleft

For slipped at last the failing ties  
That tethered flesh and bone  
And launched now are adventures new  
Out in the great unknown.

Terry Dawson



# For Anzac Day

For Anzac Day

When the owl's whistle from its thorny loft tells of the setting sun,  
Old fighting men bow down their heads for those who fell by the gun.  
When the francolin's call from the ant heap top tells of a new day born  
They're minded of their comrades lost by the hope-filled light of dawn.

Terry Dawson

# For The Girl Who's Been In Hell

Now the kindly farmer ponders  
On the girl who's been in hell.  
With loving heart he wonders  
How best to bring her back to well

Still then her friend the farmer  
Thinks on her - poor damaged thing.  
With warm heart, strives to calm her;  
By love to mend her broken wing

He upon reflection sees  
Her past curtails her future;  
Old ghosts are her enemies,  
But eyes-front the way is sure.

What better then than that she  
Jump once more and touch the sky,  
Laugh again as merrily  
As once she did in time gone by.

Terry Dawson

# Ghost Elephants

In Outeniqua's mountains dwell  
A remnant few that honour well  
The montane forest's ancient lore,  
Steadfast as the enduring shore.

~~~~~

Moist air comes in off of the sea  
Climbing the hills of scenery  
And feeds with rain that rich biome  
That once to wildlife was home.

And through the mighty trees that grow  
Vague phantom shadows come and go.  
A fleeting glimpse that strikes the eye  
Rekindles myth that will not die.

In olden day a balance dwelt  
Upon the forest and the veldt  
In days before the white men came  
Was wild land alive with game

~~~~~

The mountain range marks stark divide,  
For dry the land on northern side  
And there upon the wide Karoo  
Resides the one that ever knew  
That there in lands beyond the hills  
A wondrous relic lingered still.

Her wild heart with nature kin,  
Its natural rhythms beat within,  
In oneness with the remnant few  
Whose truth lives on midst mist and dew -

Ghost elephants that linger yet  
Their ghostliness may all regret!

How better had progress passed by  
This wonderland beneath the sky?  
This wonderland now left to cry

Terry Dawson

# Girl Of The Seasons

Girl of the Seasons

I think of these days -  
Her loveliness is Reason,  
Her reluctance dismays!

Her face is the Summer;  
Young radiant girl  
Her smile is the Springtime  
When new leaves unfurl!

Her frown is the Autumn;  
Joys dry up and fall  
Her absence brings Winter  
When loneliness calls.

Her laughter's a goblet  
Of sweet Summer wine  
And though her eyes sparkle,  
The sparkle's not mine!

Terry Dawson

# Good Bye My Friend

Good bye my friend, I can't be there  
To drink to you or share  
Old stories of the times gone by  
And meet again friends not met since we were lads  
Or talk of all the things we did, the times we had;  
Of how the river flows and bends.  
To reminisce, to laugh, to cry...  
To silent contemplate and sigh  
And wonder at the ambushing  
By which the journey ends.

Terry Dawson

# Great Horned Cattle Of Africa

The urgent lowing of a cow  
Calling out to her calf apart  
Disturbs the still of dawn, and now  
Hark... herd-boys making early start

In cattle kraal with orange dust  
And pronged as buy acacia thorns,  
The young herd-boys exhibit trust  
In Zebu cattle full of horns.

These great cattle - the tribal wealth  
Providers of both milk and blood  
That guaranty life and good health -  
Await the day and chew the cud.

Terry Dawson

# Gunner Dan

Young fresh-faced lads just like our dads,  
By mail are called to arms.  
And we set out, some glad some sad  
From cities, mines and farms  
And become lean and strong and sure  
As trained we are in art of war  
And gone for good that callow lad.

The plan is made the ambush laid  
Invisible we lurk  
Concealed by craft and grassy blade,  
Prepared for lethal work.  
But now we wait and wait and wait  
Till on ninth day in morning late  
Comes terror much delayed.

Some shots ring out, an urgent shout  
Something about the right...  
As din and tumult fill the air  
Onward us young men fight.  
We hardly know the gods to thank  
In this desperate fray -  
Our plucky gunner's turned their flank;  
The fighting goes our way!  
Thank god for Dan who makes a plan  
That gets us out of strife!  
When sudden comes a mighty sound -  
Choppers whirl overhead.  
Their cannons roar in grim downpour  
Upon disheartened foe.  
But from the hill there's shooting still...  
A direct charge, no one prefers -  
Nevertheless we try it.  
But even as we win the day  
Disquieting thought occurs:  
Why has our gun gone quiet?

[pause]



The simple cross bears honoured name  
Upon the tarnished brass.  
Below a smaller script proclaims  
How this end came to pass.  
That Dan a fighting worrier bold  
Was ever spared from growing old  
As legend he became!

And every year from then till now  
On the appointed date  
We gather to remember how  
The working of blind fate  
Let our hearts beat but took our friend  
Honour and glory without end  
To you brave gunner Dan.

As nature's wonders fill the soul  
With reverence and with awe  
Our comrades, you who paid the toll  
In awful time of war  
Stir in our hearts an awesome pride  
Our kin, our friends as may betide  
Honoured for evermore!

Terry Dawson

## He Sees Again...

His eyes are glazed the grey-beard man  
His mind is lost in thought  
Transported to some distant place  
Where once a battle fought.

The air is close the bush is thick  
And fierce is the sun  
Upon the seeming quiet place  
Where once was violence done.

He hears again the brutal din  
That tore the quiet asunder  
And lived anew that fearful time  
Till stilled again that thunder.

He sees once more the crumpled form  
A single glance tells all.  
Happy and quick his friend that morn  
Had met his time to fall.

Still to this day those dauntless brave  
Ignite in him wild pride  
Far greater though his sorrowed pangs  
At all the ones who died.

Terry Dawson

## Heed You This!

Now slightly ajar stands the door,  
To adult world; untried, unsure.  
How is a tender heart to know  
Which of the many ways to go?  
Uncertainties must it endure;  
Which seeds to plant and where to sow. □

Though inexperience has its cost,  
The one well grounded is not lost.  
Advantaged she that knows the rules  
And spurns the idle words of fools;  
Into whose heart is well embossed,  
The gain in using worthy tools.

Know that strength in friendship lies,  
And the worth of vast open skies,  
Of wilderness that calms the heart,  
Who's steady beating becomes part  
Of nature's soothing lullabies,  
And of the wild world's healing arts.

Questing for lucre is vain task,  
For gold's warm glow is surely mask,  
That make it to appear as friend  
To those whose selfworth need depend,  
On gold's lustre in which they bask,  
But brings to them heartache at end!

So make your way with quiet calm,  
And work your will yet do no harm.  
Know that gain at cost of repute  
Is folly well beyond refute!  
And know that reason and charm,  
Are allies of yours in dispute! □

Be evenhanded in dealing ways,  
It earns you trust to last your days,  
And do unto others (this is not new) ,  
As you would have them do unto you.

For nothing so greatly dismays  
As solemn word spoken untrue!

Terry Dawson

# Hope

Hope is the desert grass that prospers best in adversity,  
It is a seed awaiting rain.  
Hope a reservoir against despair,  
It is our sustaining larder in the lean times.  
Hope is the heart's faith in a better tomorrow,  
It is our bulwark against surrender!

Terry Dawson

# If He Had Been Younger

Beneath a fine hat  
That is fit for a queen  
She rides a her horse bareback  
Like a girl in a dream.  
An old farmer wonders  
As to what may have been  
If he had been younger  
When she was sixteen!

With youthful abandon  
Her wild beauty shines  
Like radiant sunlight  
On fruit heavy vines.  
The omens unhelpful  
As good sense opines  
The filly is prancing;  
The stallion declines!

Terry Dawson

## In The Land Of Shortages

And we're belting along on the pot-hole road  
And the tyres are smoking at the weight of the load  
The distance to go is yet more than we came  
And there's nought on the gauge than the makers name.  
Our note and our coin are locked tight in the banks  
So we pray to the Lord and give him our thanks  
And we hope that the garage we pass by the way  
Might fill us to quarter 'cause it's our lucky day!

Terry Dawson

# I've Met A Girl

I've met a girl  
Louise her name.  
Within I feel new strength unfurl  
And I'm no more the same.

Strange to myself, now am I  
Renewed in mind and heart,  
My load lighter than before, and why? -  
Her magic weaves its art.

Recipient me  
Of friendship's gift  
Strength-giver she  
Sure, true and swift  
As ever friend could be.

By her, unaware, is it arranged  
That life comes anew into a soul,  
And so is lonesomeness estranged;  
A life reacquainted with its goal.

Terry Dawson



# Like High Rising Hills

Elephants like ocean are power in motion,  
Like high-rising hills their presence instills  
Wonder in hearts of men.

But men are in lust for the elephants tusk.  
As ever we muster poor trinkets of luster  
As the great beasts march into final dusk.

Terry Dawson

# Midnight Dreaming

And in the midnight dreaming time  
Behold the one who could be mine  
When moonlight dances in her hair  
There's joyous warmth 'cause she is near.  
Her winning ways and looks divine  
Capture my heart, this maid of mine.

And in the dreaming, feelings stir  
In wondrous swirls of him and her  
And in the firelight shadows prance  
And twine and part by random chance...  
A brush of lips, o joy divine  
And was it luck or by design?

Now in the dreaming's secret place  
Merged shadows share a mutual space  
And heartbeats like a slow-struck drum  
Beat on together two as one  
Slow rhythm rules the love embrace,  
Hear trumpets blare, hear zithers strum!

Terry Dawson

# Miss Hanaley

Miss Hanley  
I plainly see  
That you are rather grand  
And if I may  
I'd like to say  
Give me your own fair hand.  
I'll lead you where  
The air is clear  
In yonder mountain-land?

Miss Hanley  
You are to me  
My girl of sweet surprise.  
The wide portals  
Into your soul  
Which are your lovely eyes  
Reveal to me  
A spirit free  
On wings in wide blue skies

Miss Hanley  
I dream of thee  
And thy fine hair of red  
And if I may  
I'd like to say  
Something I've never said  
My sweetest dove  
My lovely love  
I love you heart and head.

Terry Dawson

# Natures Bounty

A haunting voice calls clear and strong  
To fill the fading sky  
With soul-stirring dusk-time song;  
A bushveld lullaby:  
An owl to hold you in its thrall  
In pearl bespotted plume,  
Pours out its pure, spell-binding call -  
A mind bewitching tune.

The harsh land so little signs  
The bounty it contains  
Nor foretells of it's designs  
Yet this bird's song explains...  
For nature is a treasure store  
Not always easily found -  
This haunting voice drives on once more  
Mankind to Dreams profound!

Terry Dawson

## Nelson Mandela (A Mock Epitaph)

Here rest the bones of Nel the sage  
Who, when younger wouldn't  
Stop from doing what he shouldn't.  
But much later, when grey with age  
Did by charm what all else couldn't.

Terry Dawson

# Ode To Instant Messaging

Out of Transvaal's wild bushveld wide  
Rises blue mountain, and on its side  
There does abide a woman on her own, Louise.

Across the continent has fickle fate  
A farmer placed in lonely state  
Who much of late dreams of her alone, Louise.

Now through thin air where eagles cry  
Fleet the streams of binary numbers fly  
With each reply the friendship's grown, Louise.

Born of these exchanges, friendship's song  
Through common interests kindles strong  
And prospers long, rich in shared affinities, Louise.

Terry Dawson

# Once Your Voice Among Us Dwelt

Once your voice amongst us dwelt  
But now is gone - the absence felt

And yet

Returning from the bouldered hills  
Your rebounding echo never stills

You are the thunder calling rain  
You are the strength to try again

You are the ox that draws the plow  
The shading fig's most sturdy bough

You are the booming voice unbound  
You are the voice of reason found

You are the steadfast granite hills  
You are the strength that doubting stills

You are the keel that holds the course,  
The guiding light, you are the force!

Terry Dawson

# Providence And Wantonness

Amid the blowing winter grass,  
Upon a gentle rise  
A young man sits in khaki clad  
With vision in his eyes.  
He sees the rough and virgin land  
Transforming in his mind,  
He sees the untamed wilderness  
Take on shape, defined.

By force of will and strength of mind  
The land is caused to yield -  
What once was but a wilderness  
Is now sleek stock and field.  
Harnessed now the bountiful earth;  
The farmer plies his trade:  
The earth is tilled and silos filled  
by toil is progress made.

And year on year by toil and tear  
Are more improvements made.  
Paddocks fenced where fatstock graze,  
Bank overdrafts are paid.  
And in wide fields the golden leaf  
Grows tall in the summer heat,  
Along the path to the farm school  
Tread little learners feet.

But now in power are greedy men  
By scruple unconstrained,  
Whose lust for riches knows no bounds  
Corruptly, much they've gained  
And driven by their envious hearts,  
Reap where they did not sow;  
Through years and years of unrestraint  
They've sunk so very low!

Those who have no better trick  
Than belittle, mock and jeer,  
The lowest dregs of human kind



And vile beyond compare  
Come menacing up the dry farm road  
To do their filthy worst,  
Brandishing their spears and axes  
By God! This land is cursed.

And now that farm just lies in ruin,  
The tragedy is vast:  
The work by generations done, now  
A shadow in the past.  
And all of which he was justly proud  
Is now a devils jest:  
Beneath the sun has tyranny done  
What tyranny does best!

Terry Dawson

# Psalm 19 Retold

The wondrous lights of stary heaven  
Proclaim your works O Lord.  
The firey nomad of the skies  
That sees and knowest all,  
Causes the days and nights to pass  
Also the spring and fall.

Everlasting and clear  
Is the fear of the Lord,  
Refreshing and perfect his laws.  
To dull-witted fools  
comes wisdom and light  
Flowing surely from his tell.  
As judge and commander  
More worth He than jewels,  
Showing the righteous path well.

Greatly enriched those  
Who these things to posses  
No less are they  
Than nature's sweet  
Fresh from the honeycomb pressed,  
For he that resides in the light of the Lord  
By so doing is greatly blessed  
And by virtue are they self-reward.

From me my stealthy faults remove  
That I may stand true in Your light,  
Approve you too  
Of my wandering thoughts  
And spoken words also,  
O Lord God my redeemer!

Terry Dawson

# Questions Of A Certain Sort (There Is No Gain To Ask)

It's nature's way that young men stand  
As one against the foe  
To guard the things they hold most dear  
And reckless hazard life and limb  
'Gainst they who bear them threat.

In time the conflict's course is run  
The outcome as it may.  
Great sorrow weighs on those bereaved  
Who bear a awful load.  
And presently they'll weigh in scales  
Past hopes against the cost  
And wonder if potential gains  
Could justify the loss.

Questions of a certain sort  
There is no gain to ask.  
Reason's powers hold no sway  
In blind fates senseless realm.  
And tortured those that yet pursue  
Answers which must elude  
But peace of mind have those who know  
The great earth's ancient way:  
The toll levied upon the few  
In general serves the whole.

Terry Dawson

# Renewal

These flowers now have had their day  
Like life's dreamings, they fade away  
For every season has its need  
As vibrant colour fades to seed.  
And old life dreams its ancient dream:  
The future beckons, the past has been.  
Capsules of life, such tiny grains,  
Lie under ground awaiting rains.

Terry Dawson

# She Is My Girl By The Mountain

She is my girl by the mountain,  
Where the gladiolus grows  
And I feel her love in the mornings,  
Like an ocean breeze the blows  
And she's with me in the evenings,  
By her mountain by the sea  
And I dream dreams of happiness  
That my girl dreams of me.

Terry Dawson

# Silences

When mates are met in fellowship  
And spoken words are few  
And silence sits as comfortably  
As a well worn in shoe.  
And bound by cords of comradeship  
When gathered three or two -  
The sacred the stuff, those silences  
Will keep old friendships new.

Terry Dawson

# Solitude

Through the dark winters of loneliness  
Dreaming - hearth-fire of the mind -  
Is friend. And fellowships imagined  
are the summers of Companionship  
In our yearning.

Terry Dawson

# The Butterfly

That  
Erratic dancer on the wind, aloft  
On chance-flapped wings;  
Pauses now-and-then to sup from nectared cup,  
By little sips but oft,  
Knowing nothing of the joy it brings  
To me; it buoys me up.

Terry Dawson



# The Chagra's Slow Whistle

The Chagras slow whistle  
Though faint and from afar  
Vague memories yet called to mind  
Whose detail, like a faded dream,  
Is lost to the haze of time  
And yet...  
They conjure up a sweet melancholy  
From an age which has now pressed,  
And gone beyond recapture.

Terry Dawson

# The Crocodile Basks

In Wild West America the bandits wore masks  
But here in Zimbabwe the crocodile basks  
And shows his face boldly as he goes about town  
Yet he's looting the state of the jewels in its crown.

Terry Dawson

# The Dancing Girl

In an erotic dream I see  
A shapely girl dance close to me.  
As sensuous slow music plays,  
Her slender, lithesome body sways  
Like lover lost in extercy,  
Delightful in a thousand ways

Dancing with slow rhythmic motion,  
Like one performing her devotions  
In temple of the love goddess  
By subtle move and bold caress  
The dancing like the tidal ocean;  
Phantasmagoric loveliness!

With seductive swing of full hips  
She takes up wine glass and sips  
Then with an imperious whirl  
And toss of hair, that dancing girl  
Blows breathless kiss from rose-red lips;  
Hair a riot of raven curls!

The tempo of the music grows  
The dancing girl she spins and throws  
Her vestment off with artful flair...  
But oh, what's this? - oh grim despair...  
Awakening brings the dream to close;  
The dancing girl becomes thin air!

Terry Dawson

# The Elephants

Soft light by gradual stage reveals  
(As dark of night recedes)  
Idyllic scenes which yet conceal  
Most grim and bloody deeds

Bushvelt is harsh land to its core  
Where strong forever seek  
According to the ancient lore  
To profit from the weak.

~~~~

Alongside the herd two veteran bulls  
Stands tall in morning light  
And from their heads in glory full  
Great tusks of gleaming white. □

Experience guides them to the grove  
Where buds of spring shoot yet.  
There they banquet from the trove;  
Which never they forget. □

Tender shoots plucked from tallest trees  
Of most exquisite taste  
By agile trunks with greatest ease,  
Steady and even paced.□

Shadows shorten, the day's heat grows;  
The duo seek for rest  
And from experience each beast knows  
Beneath which tree shade is best

□~~~~□

In border lands of wilds conserved  
Where life is really tough  
Lives one with troubles undeserved  
Whoes fate has dealt him rough.□□

A master he of the bushcraft arts  
He cleans his ancient rifle.  
His quarry, the elephants of these parts;  
His self-set task's no trifle. □

He checks the track for tell-tale sign,  
Notes the bearing of the breeze,  
Thinks through again his grim design  
And frets on unpaid school fees. □

Beneath a large and leafy tree,  
In deep shade rest our duo.  
Elsewhere the poacher sits, and he  
Counts out his precious ammo. □

☒~~~ □

Now from the dust and heat and haze  
Oblique rays grant respite.  
The drift begins as in bygone days  
To water as mellows the light.

Direct the winding path proceeds  
To the banks of the hippo'd pan  
Where all may quaff their watery needs  
To last full a one-day span.

At water biostrus games unfold  
Cavorting giants unaware  
Of the cost they may yet be tolled  
For the ivory they bear.

Retiring now into the gathering dusk,  
Loud report shatters calm  
And covatous man's great want of tusk  
Bring noble beast to harm.

Against speeding bullet, what defence  
For loss of range, what plan?  
Now let the time of shame commence  
For greedy hearted man! □

If by our hand this mighty Wild  
Should vanish from the earth,  
What could we tell the Future's child  
And what would be our worth?

Terry Dawson

# The Farmworker

The barn rooster declares at last,  
The new day has begun.  
The farmworker prepares himself  
To start work with the sun.

The farmworker mops his brow,  
Surveys the weed-filled row,  
Stretches well his aching back  
Then takes up once more his hoe.

The farmworker pauses now,  
Lets rest his weary arm,  
Then presently takes up again  
The tending of the farm.

The day draws toward it's close,  
The sun low in the west;  
The farmworker's toil is done  
And he has earned his rest.

But one thing all farmworkers know,  
As sure as they are born:  
That while the long, long day is done,  
There's new day in the morn.

Terry Dawson

# The Harbinger Of Dawn

The harbinger of dawn up high  
Sings his sweet, liquid notes  
As it grows light in eastern sky  
At the new day's approach.  
Those soothing sounds that calm a man  
Bring balance as they should  
And speak of nature's wondrous plan  
To temper harm with good.

The farmer awakens from his dreams;  
To that heuglin's dulcet sound  
And follows yet his nocturnal themes  
Where fields of plenty abound;  
For who emerging from sleep's domain  
To robin's matchless song  
Could be downcast, much less refrain  
From optimism strong?

Now nature knows the ancient ways,  
Holism is her key  
Should farmers heed them all their days  
Then certain it would be  
That fair part yields to each the earth  
With jeopardy to none:  
The globe spins on; life, death, rebirth  
To each its piece of sun.

Terry Dawson



# The Highlands

How sweet it is to take the path  
That leads to Highland and to hearth  
To leave behind the busy strife  
Of the frenzied city life.

Where rolling hills in summer green  
And timbered valleys in-between  
Bring calm back to a fevered brain  
And magic melts away the strain.

.

At evening hour the fire is lit,  
In its warm glow the people sit  
And in the coals the stew pans hot  
Bubble beside the coffee pot.

Without the walls the cold winds stir  
The leafy trees while insects whirr -  
The nightjar calls shy and reserved;  
The ladies tell that dinner is served.

The call of francolin marks the dawn  
How fine the view when curtain's drawn.  
Long bridal paths down which to stroll  
And vastness to expand the soul.

And vistas to inspire awe  
As waters in white ribbon pour  
When Mtarazi's waterslunge  
In long cascade in headlong plunge.

And some would scale Nyagani's heights  
To marvel at the matchless sights  
That thrill the heart and seize the eyes;  
Great vistas beneath pellucid skies.

Now harken to the swish of line  
As angler plies his craft to dine  
And place his fly with skillful art

To tempt the trout to play it's part.

Now sinks the sun behind the hill  
And arms goosebump at evening's chill  
As folk retire to refuge warm;  
Far thunder's call is coming storm...

From the high branch beside her nest  
The lusty robbin bills her best  
And still her happy singing fills  
That garden nestled in the hills.

Terry Dawson

# The Hunting Dog

The hunting dog  
Is bent on hog  
As freely flows saliva  
And rapid paced  
The frightened chased;  
Will he be survivor?  
With bloody claw  
Is writ the lore:  
Experience is advisor.

Terry Dawson

# The Judas Coins

A blight is upon the promised lands  
Where the elephant herds roam free  
When the great one's child is snatched from the wild  
And the natural laws are defiled!

Three tens of silver pockets he  
Who takes the young ones from the free  
To live alone until their end  
No kith, no kin, nor any friend.

A curse upon the evil, Greed  
To place in bondage never freed  
The wild infants filled with fright  
Without hopes to assuage their plight.

No herd or wild to make them whole  
Or kindred ones to soothe the soul  
Till sad death finds them still alone  
Curse'd are the Judas coins; the hearts of stone!

Terry Dawson

# The Life And Death Of Young Christpowers

Now in our time lives upright man,  
Conscience his master stern,  
Though in this land of tyranny  
Brave men are apt to burn.  
And while he is a simple man,  
In moral strength he towers  
And when to him a son was born,  
They called his name Christpowers.

The father proud takes up his stand  
Against the evil state  
And dangers harsh must he endure  
From the cruel men of hate.  
The yoke of persecution falls  
Upon his shoulders broad  
But no onslaught will make him bend  
Nor sheath his righteous sword.

Now those in league with wickedness  
- Hyenas in the night -  
Dark-hearted do their evil work  
'Gainst those who stand for right.  
And fire is their agency -  
One match can reek great ruin.  
They do not care, great strife they bring  
To land disaster-strewn.

It was the night Christpowers was born  
The first time evil struck.  
Into black night the family fled  
Trusting to God and luck.  
On mountainside birth pains begin  
And scant the light to show  
From leaping flames where homestead burns  
In valley far below.

Now in the wild winter veldt  
This dark and moonless night,  
The birth is not an easy one

Without the aid of sight.  
It's not sure if new life will see  
The coming up of sun.  
In awful dark in hopefulness  
They name him for God's Son.

But fate dealt kind, the child lives,  
He prospers well in truth,  
Though a blight falls on what should be  
His carefree time of youth.  
An awful and in-creeping fear  
Preoccupies his mind:  
Nine times have flames consumed his home;  
Evil with dark combined!

Christpowers at the age of ten  
Awakens cold with fright,  
He's heard a thump land on the roof  
The thatch is sure alight.  
An acrid smoke engulfs the hut  
In blindness children flee  
But Christpowers is in distress  
He can't in time get free...

This grim crime's author all men know  
For red in claw and tooth  
The heartless heads of this land are;  
They cannot hide the truth.  
With a white heat resentment burns  
Yet fear quells rising tide,  
But certain, soon, bank-bursting flood  
Will sweep all filth aside!

Terry Dawson

# The Long Gone Smiling Faces

Schoolboys we'd been the year before  
But now we bashed the square  
And marched about in double time;  
With left rights, filled the air.

Ran miles and miles in heavy gear  
Our rifles at high port,  
Exhausted in our misery...  
Was this how war was fought?

Fast through the grass we leopard crawled  
No more where we had been.  
No movement, sound, no silhouettes  
We saw, we were not seen.

And on the range we glowed with pride  
Who had the tightest group.  
We started as a rabble band  
We end a fighting troop!

~~~~~

Too young to die we surely were,  
We young men of the war  
We knew the bush, it's sounds and signs,  
Through all the seasons, four.

We were the hunters in the wilds  
The hunted we also.  
In heart and mind we steeled ourselves  
Who sought the hidden foe

Down dusty tracks, through moonless nights,  
An ambush yet unsprung  
We bore it all with careless hearts  
Back then for we were young.

With keenest edge and readiness  
Each watched his buddy's back,

Yet now and then a brother fell;  
We called it taking flack

~~~~~

We gathered here (who beat the clock)  
Now old, but then were young,  
Who fought the war out in the wilds,  
The hills and trees among,

Bow down our heads and call to mind  
Past things, though seldom told,  
Of hardships, war and sacrifice;  
Our friends who grew not old.

With heads still bowed we know again  
The heat, the noise, the places  
And in our minds we see once more  
The long gone smiling faces.

Our sorrowed pangs as hard to bear  
This day, though years have passed  
As they had been long years before  
When first that shadow cast.

Terry Dawson



# The Milk Cows

The mombies bellow as the dawn draws near  
And dust hangs low in the morning air.  
And out to the east a franklin calls  
As the workmen scrub the milking stalls.  
And facing the dawn the milk cows await  
As madhala opens the slide pole gate,  
Then out of the kraal like beasts in a dream  
Unbidden the milken ladies stream.  
In the stable we hear the fall of blocks  
When the cow's in place and the stanchion locks,  
As the old girls with an eager zeal  
Tuck into their repast of silage and meal.  
To the rythemic click-clack of vacuum rails  
The milk of the cows flows into the pales.  
It's strained and it's chilled and it's stowed in churns  
As the cows ruminate as the cud returns -  
Into the mule cart, in soft morning light  
The churns are hoisted and stowed away tight.  
Down winding track the beasts and cart go  
To the DMB in Bula-way-o.

Terry Dawson

# The Pioneer Road

On his salted horse with his slouch hat rode  
A transport rider on the pioneer road.  
And the rider's none other than Jan Van der Stead  
Whose old frame is topped with an excellent head  
And his strong right arm on the endless trail  
Is the strapping lad called Benjamin Hayle.  
And schooled is old Jan, in the classroom of years  
While Ben is a youth of adventure and dares.

It's the terrible year when the rinderpest struck  
And they're down on their money but trust to their luck.  
The transports and oxen that once were all theirs  
Are now hocked to banks for the purchase of wares.

To the crack of the whip haul the sixteen spans  
And the wagons roll on to the rider's plans.  
And the oxen that toil beneath of the yoke  
Are the few that withstood when the cattle plague broke.  
So the kokeli leads forward from the driver's whip  
As the convoy rolls onward to a hazardous dip -  
It's the troublesome crossing of the Shashi's ford  
Where natives are restless and there's trouble abroad  
But Jan and his henchmen aren't new to the game  
And strong are their hearts and steady their aim  
But it curdles their blood when the rush is made  
And the sunlight flashes on the assegais' blade  
And the yells on the tongues of the heathen hoard  
Are met by the volleys from the banks of the ford.  
In the murderous storm of the hot leaden hail  
The charge of the impis falter and fail.  
And there in the still when the fighting is done  
The wagons cross over by one and by one.

And the road rolls on through long dreary flat  
Through the endless miles of the bushveldt mat.  
Till amongst the tall hills where the weather is cooler  
And they're clear of the lands of Lobengula,  
Comes word by way of Ngundu halt  
That the nation of Shona has joined the revolt

As the shifting of sands in the endless intrigue  
Sees the foes of old times are now bonded in league.

Now the kraals of the Shona are perched on the heights  
And the light of their fires betwinkle the nights  
And precipitous slopes and near vertical fall  
Are hazard to the men of the king when they call  
To plunder fresh women and cattle and slaves  
While the men and the old ones are fodder for graves.  
Now the Shona will fight when the wall's at their back  
But they've no appetite for offence or attack  
And the creep and the pounce in the dark of night  
Is preferred to the hazard of man to man fight.

Many are the troubles and great is the load  
That are borne by the men who travel the road  
Where attack by the natives or badlands one hears  
Are the worries, they say, of all wagoneers  
And prominent all on the road to ruin  
Are horse fly and tsetse and mis-for-tune.

And weary the men as the sun dips low  
But each in his heart knows there's further to go.  
Now Ben gallops in with thunder and dust  
And waving his hat and shouting to bust  
That ahead a few miles and gathered in force  
A fierce band of spearmen who stand in their course.  
Now Jan looks about at the lay of the land  
And finding it good, he circles his hand.  
At once the drills of the laager commence  
And the wagons draw around in age-old defence  
And within them is built a boma of thorn  
To hold the beasts safe through the night to the dawn.  
With a cool and a calm that's devoid of pretence  
Jan assigns to each man his arc of defence  
And with resolute voice that steadies and calms  
He recalls to his men of the strength of their arms!  
The smoke from the fires gives the cattle unease  
And drums from afar are borne in on the breeze.  
Old Jan, his pipe lit, goes inspecting the lines  
And harkens to the night for telltale signs.  
Dispute of the dangers they pass safe to the dawn

As the clearance patrol find the foe is withdrawn.  
And the cookboy called Cooky in lieu of his name  
Is busy with coaxing the embers to flame.  
From the lips of the crew, an ironical cheer  
As aroma of coffee late comes on the air...

Through the trees of the bush like shadow and shade  
Will-'o-the-wisp sightings of Shona are made  
And bands of the fighters in irresolute style  
Keep watch on the wagons from over a mile.  
Should ambushers lie low in the tall yellow grass  
Of a trickier stretch of the Providence pass  
Then the progress of commerce could be brought to a halt  
As a high fence would stymie the unbridled colt.  
Then onward and upward with scouts to the fore  
The wagons roll on through the foothills once more.  
And into the mouth of the narrow defile  
Where some warriors close to under a mile.  
Jan levels his rifle and steadies his aim  
And off to the side Ben's doing the same.  
The warriors sink down into cover of grass  
And soon they are lost in the folds of the pass.  
More spearmen appear on a ridge on the right  
But a round in their midst has them scatter in fright.  
The ascent of the pass bears many travails  
By great heart and grit the transporter prevails  
And the Shonas have squandered their single best chance  
To plunder the convoy and halt its advance!  
And Jan van Der Stead feels the thrill of relief  
That the ascent of the pass, though fraught, had been brief  
And he passed the hip flask of whisky about  
Giving praises to God who had spared him a rout!  
Now the miles melt away down the half formed track  
As the wagons roll on with the wind at their back.  
Some men at the wagons are shading their eyes  
At the sight of far horsemen who are cresting a rise..  
Then a cheer goes up at the glad sight seen  
For the riders are surely the men of the queen!  
The red faced sergeant says he's Ponsonby  
And that he and his men are the BSAP  
And they escort the wagons without further events  
To the siege bloated town of mud huts and tents.

In the comfort and cool of a rough-thatched abode  
They wash from their throats the dust of the road  
And they toast health to each other and to that of the crown  
In the busy saloon of Victoria's town!  
All the talk is of witches who lead the revolt  
And how to prevail and who was at fault;  
Of murders at night and treacherous deeds  
And narrow escapes and desperate needs;  
Of tales of courage or terror filled flight  
Through wild places and friendless at night,  
But the question most begged of Jan and his crew  
Is of the weapons and ammo that they had brought through!

From out of the wagons the merchandise pours  
For farmers and miners or purveyors of cures.  
There are boxes of bullets and rifles and more  
And axes and shovels and picks by the score;  
There are bales of cloth, hats, buttons and boots;  
Fine dresses for ladies to prurient hoots  
And tools for the working of wood and of steel  
And rolls of hoop iron for mending a wheel.  
There's liquor aplenty for joy or for woe;  
All manner of seeds for a farmer to grow;  
There's rice and there's flour, salt, pepper an spices  
And knives, forks and spoons and kitchen devices...  
From the very first moment the trading is brisk  
And handsome rewarded is Jan for his risk!  
When the day is near spent and low hangs the sun  
The last of the trading and bargaining's done  
And the paniers bulge for the money has flowed  
And the wagons stand empty in want of new load  
And Providence has repaid what it surely had owed  
To the resolute rider of the pioneer road.

~~~~~X~~~~~

Terry Dawson

## The Plum In Springtime (Sixtieth Birthday)

The plum in spring returns to life,  
In dazzling new white blossoms rife  
Which pleasure well the heart and mind  
And sense of calm there leave behind.

Contrast the winds of winter hurled,  
Against the ramparts of my world!  
For of my three score years and ten,  
Three score will not come again

Now as the years in hand grow few,  
I contemplate what best to do  
And having pondered see it plain,  
What better than press on the same.

Terry Dawson

# The Poet

The poet edits  
Now his poem  
Mind on fire  
Mouth afoam

Each amendment  
A new toy  
Shining, gleaming  
Thing of joy.

Dashing, brilliant  
Pure delight  
Brightly shimmering  
Glints of light

But in time  
he comes to know  
The shining  
Was all false glow

The flashes  
Of poetic art  
To calmer mind  
Seem not so smart!

Terry Dawson

# The Poet Girl

Red hair aflame  
The poet girl  
With words wild, hot, untame  
(Her locks in swirl)  
Outpours her woes  
Into unfeeling world.

On mountain high  
Her would-be beau  
Writes poems in reply.  
He surely knows  
Her joy is gone  
Beneath low heavy sky.

From all she hides  
Woes without ends.  
To him she sad-confides:  
She now depends  
On solitude  
Her leel and steadfast friend.

His mountains though  
Are far from her;  
Great distance is the foe.  
He would prefer  
To have her close -  
Forward together go.

He'd bold recite  
His love poems  
To her each star-filled night.  
His old mind roams  
Down many roads -  
Which one will bring her light?

Terry Dawson



# The Sad Ballad Of Mopane Jack

Now the dancing games of the campfire's flames have mysterious effect it is true  
On the stories told as the night grows cold under the vast cobalt blue  
When voices drone low by the dull ember's glow, beneath the great southern  
cross

Then it's plain to tell that the stories go well when truth is gone to the loss!

And gathered anew an old soldiering crew and each treats the other as brother  
For the comradely band can best understand the service of each as on other.  
By the campfire's light on that balmy night, the talk is of times long back:  
Asks Zambezi Bill, 'who remembers still the one called Mopane Jack?

'He was a man and a half who loved to laugh and his shoulders shook when he  
did

That thunder roll near out of control marked a happy man, but it hid  
A steely heart that brooked no part for those who strayed from the right and  
such,

Yet inside he was sad that giant of a lad, for he was the one who cared too  
much.'

Then the moon sinks down below the leafy crown, as a fifth comes late to the  
fold

A spectre he, that none can see, to hear the old stories retold.

It's a ghost come back, for that fifth is Jack and he smiles at the yarns that he  
hears!

For he surely knows how a story grows on tongues that have tasted beers. □

Now Bob stokes the flames and then exclaims, 'old Jack, he was one of a kind.  
That old game ranger was a magnet for danger; a man by courage defined  
One time on the spoor of forty gooks or more, it was way down Kanyemba way  
Said the sarge 'what to do, they're many, we're few? ' Said Jack, let's make them  
pay! '

'For three days more, they followed that spoor till at last it was no more seen:  
A villager there, had taken. great care to drive cattle where the tracks had been.  
Old Jack, he swore as he broke the the jaw of that one who'd thwarted his aim! '  
Says Bill, 'it's clear, ' as he opens a beer, 'Mopane Jack knew the rules of the  
game! ''

Dreams Jack:

It was no joke, it was my fist that broke  
And should my time ever returny  
A rifle butt not an upper cut  
Would help that blighter to learn!

'One time on the road with a hell of a load on the back of his Series one, '  
Says Jed with a shake of his head, 'and the spedo reading nearly a ton,  
Streams of tracer fly by like green firefly and Jack gives a mighty roar.  
With a deal of nerve and some crafty swerve he slams his foot to the floor!

'And there alone in the killing zone time drags by at a pace that's slow,  
Though he strains his eyes to learn their disguise, he discerns not the place of his  
foe,  
But now the road bends and then it descends; of a sudden he's in the clear,  
With pistol unholstered, his courage is bolstered as he fires six shots in the air! ' □

Dreams Jack:

I was nine tenths through before I even knew  
that the buggers were shooting at me  
I was nine miles high on the bobo gwaai  
and my mind just buzzed like a bee.

Now the flames of the fire leap higher and higher as some wet logs pop and  
squeak  
Says Jim in rough voice, Jack came once by choice with us to Mozambique.  
It was an all night tramp to the gooks base camp hid in forest of thorn  
Which we reached in time in extended line and we revved it come the dawn.

Now the fearful din as the sweep went in, that was a thing to behold  
And to our surprise it was twice the size, that camp, as what we'd been told  
But they had no pride, those ones inside and they fought with half a heart  
And presently as all could see their defences fell apart.

The relentless advance gave scarcely a chance, the defenders their courage to  
find,  
Then filled with dread, the most of them fled leaving their fallen behind,  
And wise men one feels that took to their heels for terrible they were harried  
This much is certain that withering curtain was death to those that tarried.

Then taking his ease in the shade of the trees Jack bursts into singing this song:  
'Well what do you know, this day I've struck blow against that historical wrong! "  
Of the landmine blast in that time long past that blew my old Landy to pieces

And though much delayed, at last they've paid... Their debt remaining decreases!

Dreams Jack:

That makes me laugh, but cut in half  
That story just regaled  
Though its true that I sung - with my dried out tongue  
The sound effects totally failed.

'He spoke one time of an old gold mine', said Bob, 'and a fortune that he made  
But later 'twas said that the seam went dead and after the bills were paid  
Old Jack was broke and never more spoke of the time when he burrowed for gold

For he nearly went mad that his luck turned bad - at least that is what I was  
told.' □

Jim took up the tale, 'the mine was for sale, poor Jack was in a trough of despair  
And what do you think, he took to the drink and drank himself stupid all year.  
His mining gear, was in poor repair and he hardly owned the boots that he wore  
And his spirits were low that he'd nothing to show for his troubles and his heart  
was sore.' □

Dreams Jack:

For me, never again that ball and chain  
which for sure is a miners lot  
For I love to roam in the wilds alone,  
ten thousand square miles my plot! □

'One R & R in the Shangani bar, his bottle of whiskey in place  
'Howd'you do', says the girl, 'I'm Sue' and freckles highlighted her face  
And in that while her happy smile was the light of the world to Jack  
'By any chance are you free to dance', asks Jack, and never looks back.'□

Dreams Jack:

So lovely and fair with her golden hair;  
she saw some merit in me!  
That leap, that prance that lucky chance  
of fate changed my destiny! □

'With his luck on a run that son-of-a-gun, that very same night found employ  
With a hunting crew from a man he knew, and he gave a whoop for joy!  
Now with his new wife and his wilderness life, Jack's happiness wanted for

naught.

In that wild domain he'd ever remain and he felt a thrill at the thought.

'Now the shot is high and the bull won't die; a buffalo shot through the lung  
And as is the rule in this kind of duel, it's not over till one or other dies young.  
And the traces of red are a trail of blood as the beast flees clear out of view.  
The follow-up started, precludes the faint-hearted and these who don't fear it are few!

'As though by lure the beast runs sure to a place where the bush grows thick  
And the hunter knows that the honour goes in such place to the one who is quick.

Then so fast that it blurs, a disaster occurs; that bull kills Jack on the spot  
For he is impaled as his rushed aim has failed to deliver a telling shot.

Dreams Jack:

And so was my colourful life set free from strife  
as my essence flew free to the sky  
All earthly pains I left on the plains  
which now far below me lie.  
And do not cry for now guardian I  
Of that wilderness far below  
As I elect to sure protect  
The wild ones wherever they go.

With big voice tells Bill: 'his laughter echoes still all around these parts.  
When clouds reach high in November sky as happily sing the larks  
And thunder fills the valley and hills and in so doing declares  
That life-giving rain is near again and so it will be all the years!

Now the dancing games of the campfire's flames have mysterious effect it is true  
On the stories told as the night grows cold under the vast cobalt blue  
When voices drone low by the dull ember's glow, beneath the great southern  
cross  
Then it's plain to tell that the stories go well when truth is gone to the loss!

Terry Dawson

# The Skeleton Coast

Across the Uhab river's dry bed  
Lies a land unlike any other,  
An arid plain beside the sea,  
Of wild, mysterious beauty.  
Land of majesty, wonder and awe  
In pastels, seven colours of sand  
That stir a man from within  
To be his most and to strive ever for more.

And fog rolls in on chill, chill winds  
From a cold, cold treacherous sea.  
Beheld there incongruous things  
Like ships, now skeletal wrecks,  
Adrift on an ocean of sand  
Mile upon mile from the shore.  
White-bleached driftwood there  
Castaways from far distant land.

And in the vastness of that wide space  
Is thrust upon man his own tininess.  
And there's a stillness and a silence  
To calm a turbulent soul  
And arranges things from within  
That a tendency to violence,  
Gives way to love of peace!

But stranger by far than all things,  
In that strangest of wild, wild lands,  
Is the companionship that is given  
By desert solitude, to those that seek -  
And the thus-comforted soul  
Sings its songs in return  
In that wilderness strange and unique.

Terry Dawson

# The Spoilsport

The things we do! I dream of you, In dream my face is pressed  
Up close and tight in time of night against your lovely breast  
And warming glow commence to grow from that proximity  
Then questing touch and such and such, oh joy these things should be  
But now crowd call halts dream's hot thrall, the waking hour is here!  
And rue the cost in pleasures lost, hark hear the spoilsport cheer!

Terry Dawson

# Trees

With perfect certainty all know  
The wondrous ways of trees that grow.

Their sacred forms against the sky  
Inspire all who pass them by

While thirsting roots have stealthy-found  
Their liquid banquet underground

And each has with perfection laid  
Soft, leafy resting place in shade

Baring gnarled trunk with scarred, bowed bough  
Yet glad-beheld by man somehow.

And gives each year abundant yield  
By crafty methods well concealed.

The mighty tree like destiny  
Bestows its gifts on you and me!

Terry Dawson

# We Gardians

In a world where sale goes  
To the highest bid  
We face loss of wilderness  
Almighty God forbid.

We guardians  
Of this dry dust  
Do what we do  
Because we must -  
And some beasts pay  
The awful cost  
That wild range  
Is never lost

If any know a better way  
To save the wild quarter  
Prey tell... and gladly we  
Call halt to further slaughter

Terry Dawson



# When A Despot Dies

A din rose up in the land of the lost  
As news fell on the ear  
And great the clamour to accost  
The one who now drew near  
Out of the throats of the too-soon dead  
A fearful banshee curled  
For he, so long the face of dread  
Has gained the spirit world

From mine shaft and from shallow grave  
The angry dead arise  
The armies of the ghostly brave  
Swirl upward to the skies  
And each avenging spirit bears  
A toll it must extract  
Each through the long and empty years  
Has kept its vow intact

And to the rising gyre of din  
With fearful halting tread  
The new ghost frail and ghastly thin  
Advanced with awful dread.  
All saw the terror in his eye,  
'Fear not', they say as one  
And still with single voice they cry  
'Your torment's just begun...'

Terry Dawson

# When The Black Dog Comes Stalking

When the Black Dog comes stalking  
And spirits are down-pressed,  
To go barefoot walking  
In the wilds what's best.

When joy's at an end  
And spirits are low,  
Then take you a friend  
And wild-walking go.

Amid the great trees  
A wild orchestra plays  
Where a hurt mind it frees  
Of all its dismays.

And there by calm feelings  
Your life will be blessed  
As by nature's sure healings  
Your spirit's caressed.

Know this my brave-heart  
When you're in despairs:  
In far mountain rampart,  
There's a farmer who cares.

Terry Dawson

# Where Did The Years All Go

Once more the fiery ball around  
An old year out, a new one found  
And on we spin in merry twist  
Some chances gained and others missed..

How simple now the whole world seems  
To callow youth with restless dreams.  
No burdens yet the shoulders bear,  
Not yet known the weight of care.

Against the world we pit our strength  
And learn our measure breath and length  
Unyielding earth bends to our will;  
We love the power, we hunger still.

In prime of life we take control,  
We set our course then onward roll  
And in our sweep is borne along  
Our kith and kin the weak the strong.

On-marching time rolls back the years.  
We turn to grey through age or cares,  
Then for our moment we are wise,  
We soar on wings and rule the skies.

Now stooping man with silver hair  
Hankers back to yesteryear,  
Marveling where the time has gone;  
Ready to pass the baton on..

Terry Dawson

# Where Have All The Years Gone?

Where have the years all gone? A poem.

Once more the fiery ball around  
An old year out, a new one found  
And on we spin in merry twist  
Some chances gained and others missed..

How simple now the whole world seems  
To callow youth with restless dreams.  
No burdens yet the shoulders bear,  
Not yet known the weight of care.

With strength of arm and mind we bend  
Unwilling world to meet our end.  
By confidence is cleared the way,  
Masters we at work and play.

In prime if life we take control,  
We set our course then see us roll  
And in our sweep is borne along  
Our kith and kin, the weak the strong.

On-marching time rolls back the years.  
We turn to grey through age or cares,  
Then for our moment we are wise,  
We soar on wings and rule the skies.

Now stooping man with silver hair  
Hankers back to yesteryear,  
Marveling where the time has gone;  
Ready to pass the baton on..~td 2018

Terry Dawson

# Whose Road?

The elephants speak:

The thought occurs  
You creeping curs  
That you are much confused.  
We hefty grey  
Have this to say  
This wayfare is all used  
Now pray turn back  
You mangy pack  
In case you are misused!

The dogs speak:

Look in our eyes  
You over size  
You'll see we're not afraid  
Now You return  
Or you will learn  
The price that must be paid  
For we have claws  
And crushing jaws  
Should error here be made!

The soul of the road speaks:

There are two tracks,  
One goes, one backs  
Solution is at hand  
Creatures of heft  
Pass on the left  
Follow the line of sand  
And on the right  
In broad daylight  
Will pass the painted band.

The heart of the wilderness speaks:

The face of pride  
Should not abide  
Beneath these hallowed skies  
Who feigns to tall  
Will surely fall;  
Follow the way of Wise -  
Who chooses dare  
When it is clear  
There's chance for compromise?

Terry Dawson

# Wild Rememberings

I wander the wilds lost in thought  
And scant heed to those wilds I paid  
But presently my eye was caught  
By elephants at rest in shade  
Of albidas that dot the plain  
Of that vast region, flat, untame.

Those giants in majestic state  
Despite their might exude a calm -  
My heart beats on at steady rate;  
All to my soul a soothing balm.  
By scent and sight they me discern  
Yet they rest on in unconcern.

Motionless the behemoths stand  
Like statues in the wilderness  
And in my heart I understand  
They are the more and I am less.  
In wonderment I stare bewitched  
Not knowing yet how I'm enriched

Now I am old - long years have past  
And thinking back to that far time  
I see the lesson well at last:  
Oneness with wilds is near-divine  
And he who would be person whole  
Firstly must be enriched in soul.

Terry Dawson

# Youth Who First Must Fight

The bell's last peel drifts on the air  
That marks the close of old school year  
As turns again times restless tide  
And youth advance on future fair

But youthful dreams with fate collide  
Which cramps prospects that once were wide;  
Young hearts with onerous burden hung  
To weigh hard choice and then decide.

A heavy load for those so young  
Whose adult life has just begun  
To run for life or stand for war;  
Dishonor or in maelstrom flung.

And though they may some qualms endure  
They pass through that uncertain door  
Perchance mindful of their repute  
Yet in their righteous cause secure.

Now march and run and shout and shoot  
For them the life of raw recruit  
Until that hapless mob congeal  
Into fine band of men in boots.

Never was made a finer steel  
Forged in the cauldron of ordeal  
From ore of such uncertain main,  
Than from youth who fight for ideal.

Now into wild and harsh terrain  
Enduring trials of life untame  
And traffic in a brutal trade  
In warfare's harsh, heartless domain.

Advance by moonlight sore afraid  
As prelude to some daring raid  
And mindful of the stealthy arts  
That keep their purpose unbetrayered.



Each small sound and sight imparts  
New lesson to their beating hearts  
For tiny the clue is that declares  
Where peril lurks with deadly darts

And on through all the weary years  
Of losses, victories, joys and tears,  
Whatever shifting fate bestows,  
SoldierIng proofs against all wears.

Now circumstance brings war to close  
And every soldier homeward goes,  
Yet what of him combat-inured;  
The one who only fighting knows?

The future is the least ensured  
For they that never once demurred.  
For them that risked all unsecured  
Outbreak of peace is hard-endured!

Terry Dawson

# Zimbabwe - The Winter Of '17

By highway's edge the beggar begs  
And dreams of perhaps meal.  
So thin and lost the beggar's dog  
That loiters at his heal.

Hardhearted, cold the cops arrive  
In their jackbooted feet -  
The wretched pair forsake place:  
Today they will not eat.

The populace their eyes cast down  
Look only at their feet  
For no man's eyes can meet his mate's  
Through shame in his defeat.

How long think some until that time  
When shame to anger turns  
And men rise up in righteous rage  
And all Zimbabwe burns.

Terry Dawson

## Zimbabwe 2013

If you stop and listen closely  
On a still and windless night  
You'll hear the modern sounds  
Of empty stomachs growling long,  
Of Hopes without a road to go,  
And Desperation's silent scream.  
These are the sounds, alas to say,  
Of Zimbabwe twenty thirteen.

Terry Dawson

# Zimbabwe 2016

Our poverty now is absolute,  
Rotting garbage lies about  
And flies infest this land.  
The last remaining coping plan is made,  
Beyond it looms the void.  
Our bloated leaders wine and dine and laugh  
And flaunt their wealth and plot new plunder.  
And we the ruled despair:  
The options now to lay down and die... or rise.

Terry Dawson

# Zimbabwe 2020

The rains don't come, suns set, suns rise.  
The godless land, the cloudless skies -  
The tragic farmers have no tears  
The four-weeks-wilting crops are theirs.

Brute force reigns, the wicked rule;  
The craven rich, the cunning cruel.  
A broken bodied, spirit-crushed,  
Sullen, angry nation hushed.

The kneaded dough, the rising hour  
A smouldering anger turns to power  
The risen young, the freedom songs  
Toyi-toying youth protesting wrongs.  
The streets are thronged, tempest parade -  
The tyrants fear the beast they've made! !

Terry Dawson