

# The Battle

Strawbs

In the early dawn the Bishops' men  
Shivered in the damp  
But the shiver came not from the cold  
And spread throughout the camp  
The trembling horses sensed the fear  
Of silent thoughtful men  
Who prayed that wives and families  
Might see them once again.

The bishops sent a dawn patrol  
To investigate the weight  
Of forces at the King's command  
Ensnconced behind the gate  
The ground mist hid the patrol's approach  
As they drew close enough to show  
The sentries on the battlements  
And an archer drew his bow.

From the topmost tower a sentry fell  
As an arrow pierced his skull  
And his headlong flight into the moat  
Seemed that of a gull  
The patrol reported little  
There was nothing much to see  
But the strong and silent castle  
A symbol of the free.

The King's men took communion  
As the first rays of the sun  
Lit up the castle's gloomy walls  
The fatal day begun  
From the castle green the rooks took flight  
To the high trees in the east  
To their carrion minds the battlefield  
Set a table for a feast.

A tide of black, the Bishops' men,  
Equality their right  
Swarmed like ants across the hill  
Their aim at last in sight  
The King's men dressed in purest white  
Were driven back by force  
And the fighting grew more violent  
As the battle took its course.

The Bishops gave the order  
No mercy to be shown  
The sacrifice will reap rewards  
When the King is overthrown  
The sight of children lying dead  
Made hardened soldiers weep  
The outer walls began to fall  
They moved towards the keep.

The rooks surveyed the battlefield  
Their hungry beady eyes  
Revelled in the sight of death

Showing no surprise  
The pressure mounted steadily  
As the Bishops neared the gate  
And the desperate King called to his knights  
"It's your lives or the State".

When the anxious King began to fail  
As many thought he might  
The Queen ran screaming round the walls  
And urged the men to fight  
The Bishops' men were tiring  
As the afternoon drew late  
And the King's men lowered the drawbridge  
And poured out through the gate.

They fought their way across the bridge  
The men like falling leaves  
Or ears of corn that fall in swathes  
The vicious sickle cleaves  
The tide receded up the hill  
The waste of reclaimed land  
Once decaying swamp became  
A shore of pure white sand.

A blinded priest was seen to bless  
Both dying and the dead  
As he stumbled around the battlefield  
His cassock running red  
If uniform were black or white  
His eyes could never see  
And death made no distinction  
Whatever man he be.

As darkness fell both camps withdrew  
Their soldiers slain like cattle  
Leaving the rooks to feast alone  
The victors of the battle  
At evensong both camps reviewed  
Their sad depleted ranks  
As survivors of the battle  
Gave God their grateful thanks.