The Battle

Strawbs

In the early dawn the Bishop's men
Shivered in the damp
But the shiver came not from the cold
And spread throughout the campThe trembling horses sensed the fear
Of silent thoughtful men
Who prayed that wives and families
Might see them once againThe bishops sent a dawn patrol
To investigate the weight
Of forces at the King's command
Ensconced behind the gateThe ground mist hid the patrol's approach
As they drew close enough to show
The sentries on the battlements
And an archer drew his bowFrom the topmost tower a sentry fell
As an arrow pierced his skull
And his headlong flight into the moat
Seemed that of a gullThe patrol reported little
There was nothing much to see
But the strong and silent castle
A symbol of the freeThe King's men took communion
As the first rays of the sun
Lit up the castle's gloomy walls
The fatal day begunFrom 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 feastA tide of black, the Bishop's men
Equality their right
Swarmed like ants across the hill
Their aim at last in sightThe King's men dressed in purest white
Were driven back by force
And the fighting grew more violent
As the battle took its courseThe Bishops gave the order
No mercy to be shown
The sacrifice will reap rewards
When the King is overthrownThe sight of children lying dead
Made hardened soldiers weep
The outer walls began to fall
They moved towards the keepThe rooks surveyed the battlefield
Their hungry beady eyes
Reveled in the sight of death

Showing no surpriseThe pressure mounted steadily
As the Bishops neared the gate
And the desperate King called to his knights
It's your lives or the StateWhen the anxious King began to fail
As many thought he might
The Queen ran screaming round the walls
And urged the men to fightThe Bishop's men were tiring
As the afternoon drew late
And the King's men lowered the drawbridge
And poured out through the gateThey fought their way across the bridge
The men like falling leaves
Or ears of corn that fall in swathes
The vicious sickle cleavesThe tide receded up the hill
The waste of reclaimed land
Once decaying swamp became
A shore of pure white sandA blinded priest was seen to bless
Both dying and the dead
As he stumbled around the battlefield
His cassock running redIf uniform were black or white
His eyes could never see
And death made no distinction
Whatever man he beAs darkness fell both camps withdrew
Their soldiers slain like cattle
Leaving the rooks to feast alone
The victors of the battleAt evensong both camps reviewed
Their sad depleted ranks
As survivors of the battle
Gave God their grateful thanks

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