

*Of Food
High Priest
of the Tea Urn*

YOU don't just drop in for a quick cup of tea —
Though you're offered an excellent brew.
The stainless steel counter's a pleasure to see,
And the urn's always gleaming like new.

But they're incidental to what you will find
When you favour this haven of rest,
Where badinage flies in a manner designed
To put your nerve-ends to the test.

It's nasal and pertinent, noisy and blunt,
And it's hurled into space with aplomb —
Yet no one is filled with a sense of affront,
Though you feel you've been hit by a bomb.

Behind the steel ramparts, there stands the flow's source.
He's compact, he's burly, he's gruff —
The good-humoured font of the crisp and the coarse,
Whose tongue is so affably rough.

“Who's your friend?” he enquires, when a regular calls
For hot bacon baps and a tea —
Then bounces his verdict around the caff's walls:
“A right bloody convict, ask me. . .”

With epithets flying, the subject must be
Haemophilic or asterisk-prone.
High priest of the tea urn, his victims agree
Is a man in a class of his own.

Hair-curling diatribes twang in a trice.

Of Food

The high priest comes po-faced to farce.
Small customer's leaving, pursued by advice:
"Watch out for the step! Mind your arse!"

But under such pleasantries, leather-lunged host
Keeps gentle humanity's smiles —
A cocktail in tea cups which makes it the most
Remarkable café for miles.
