

# Lady Jewel

UNION\* was the street where there arose  
The union which has since defied collapse.  
She asked me for the shorthand for *propose*.  
All unsuspecting, I replied, *perhaps*.

Somewhere, all-seeing Fate that moment smiled.  
It knew two artless hearts were on their way  
To share a life's companionship, beguiled  
By caring love, new-blossoming each day.

That love was oft' unspoken, but it knew  
Its silences would always represent  
The trust and warmth which were the other's due.  
How fortunate, my love knew what I meant!

Her *specialness* defeats the hapless word  
And makes the honeyed phrase admit defeat;  
Makes adjectives seem hollow and absurd –  
Yet ineffectiveness was ne'er so sweet.

A lovely lady's shared my joys and tears.  
A loving mother's grown from bride and wife.  
I did not need a tenth of forty years  
To realise the ruby in my life.

\* This was a ruby wedding salute. I met my future wife, Elsa, when she was teaching at the secretarial college to which I repaired for a brush-up course in shorthand on my entry into journalism after completing my National Service. Its address was Union Street, Birmingham. Years later, though I could well be wrong, *propose* and *perhaps* still seem to me to be candidates for two very similar outlines in Pitman's Shorthand – JS.