

Time

The Rose-Coloured Swan

BENEATH the tree, the ancient sat,
His loyal jacket stained
By embers from his pipe. His hat
Was deeply age-engrained.

The sight of him was not designed
To stir or else impress.
His face was Crewe-and-Clapham lined;
His shirt, a beer-splashed mess.

The ancient was reputedly
A stern, unsmiling man,
Whose staple food was said to be
Just filings from a can.

And when one day some children came
To mock him as he sat.,
He picked the biggest out by name
And stopped them, just like that.

“Now hark”, he said, “you’re off to school,
But stop off on the way.
Rose-coloured swans are on the pool
For you to see today.”

Agog, they went, and found a swan –
But knew not what to think,
Because this solitary one
Had not a hint of pink.

And after school, back at the tree,
They said, “That swan was white,
And all of us down there could see
You hadn’t got it right.”

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The ancient, being thus reviled,
Said, “Goodness only knows,
I would have thought the dullest child
Had heard of a white rose!”

And suddenly, the scowl had flown.
He grinned from ear to ear –
The first delight that he had shown
Since All Fools’ Day last year.
