

On returning to Kent

One, like him to a snow-capped mountain, did ordain
The tribal throng should meet again
So wingéd message, many a score,
Bidding them to come once more
Sped round the globe and made the call
That would summon one and all
Thus Antipodean charms were laid
To enchant the old and tempt staid
Another had mystic runes that showed the truth
Of sadly vanished faded youth
One, like a little rock, twice ordered feast
One lit by candles, not the least
And another, high and noble, did smooth the way
So on that fateful day
They could step through times dark door
And test the *al-kīmiyā* arts once more
So at Durovernum Cantiacorum now they sought
To see what fleeting time had wrought
To meet again upon that hill
To see if change was good or ill
First came the eldest, their respected sage,
Still in full mind despite his age
Then the mayor quite plain without his gown
Came to tell of changes in the town
A Viking fierce from Hamlet's land
One from Sefton's shore of sand
An Artificer from the northern fort
A man now of Essex, a jovial sort
A man of court, the governing breed
One of Cymri's fabled seed
Fair wench *ville de Genève's* fashion toast
Another maid imperially ordered most
A local lad, a former lord of his own clan

And many other searching man
Came in quest from far and near
Too many to list each one here
Oh they were a weird, exotic crew
Talking strange of what they knew
Of twisting light and speeding change
Of tangled coils with magic range
Or how they tamed on many a day
Ατομος, as Greeks would say
Such was their babble that those stood by
Could swear such spells would break the sky
Else their discussion all the day
Was of those who had gone away
So over graven images of their youth
They coned and searched to find the truth
For of the tribe that were not there
Some still were alive in places fair
Others, were in eternal dream
Having drunk from Lethe's fatal stream
So to the temple off they strode
Winding down the newer road
Where older forts could simply hide
Midst vast new castles on each side
But then like wanderers saved from despair
They came upon their former lair
The kindly guard of this fearsome tower
Bid welcome as was his great power
And so they slipped into the enchanted cave
And kindly did their host give wave
Of greeting and permission too
So they could wend their way all through.
Yet hold – for it was very strange
What enchantment had wrought this change?
As through darkened glass they saw
All the things that were before
Yet like some fevered, curséd dream

Now nothing was as it had been
Such siren memories all around
Would like Ὀδυσσεύς them all confound
‘Til truth and dream were all the one
And no-one new what they had done
New doors and walls had been by mystery placed
In echoing spaces where once they paced
But here and there were traces still
That dimméd memory could still fill
Here was the magic alchemist’s den
With mysterious vessels only they could ken
With new young acolytes in search once more
For magic potions by the score
Sad to see such mis-spent youth
For our agéd heroes knew the truth
And they would keep it hid away
Till through scribe’s journals they could say
“Tis mine the honour for look, see
This epistle names just me”
So where are they all for their time has come
Three score and ten are spent and fully gone
From mewling babe via teens great fun
Their allotted time has passed and run
But hold!
This cannot be, for inside they are but twenty three
Strong of arm and quick of mind
As great of spirit as you could find
Life’s great race is yet to run
Yet as they turn their faces to the sun
To feel the warmth then they shall find
A wonderous future far behind

Pluvius minimus