

to whom a bottle of port or even beer  
would have been truly Christian Christmas cheer.

Yet they received us gravely, courteously,  
without surprise or none that we perceived,  
thanked us with gentle sadness, took our food  
and sent us back to mother feeling good.

Within a month the haloes that we'd worn  
were badly tarnished by forgetfulness.  
We'd paid our debt to conscience and were free  
from guilt's insufferable debility.

## BRIAN WALKER

### APRIL FOOL

I believed it  
when my fruit trees burst with blooms,  
sunlight lifted winter-wan hands  
to rake and hoe and pruning shears;  
I went out to forget my name  
and find a new one in the birdsongs—  
or scratched by wind on puddles in the park.  
But in the night a burglar came  
who knew my address and with hoary hand  
returned me to my numbered place.