

Blind March to London, April 5th – 25th 1920
(‘Social Justice Not Charity’)

That clink must be hobnails. Dawson’s, I reckon.
The jingle is coins in a pocket, or keys. And the off-
beat k-tunk will be Shaw with his limp and his clogs.
But mostly it’s boots. We know all about boots.

Every day in the workshop means boot-mending,
brush-making, baskets and boredom.
‘When I consider how my light is spent...’
I loved Milton, even before the accident.

*What’s that, Billy? Yes, London’s bigger than Leeds.
Keep it up, lad, only five more days to go.*

I was quick enough with the Braille until ‘handiwork’
roughened my fingertips. Now every word’s a blur.

They say The Blind as though we’re all the same.
But I can play a moving picture in my head: the long view
from Pen-Y-Ghent, a Red Kite hanging in the sky,
my wife’s eyes when she turns to me.

Shaw’s world is all passing lights, says
he can make them dance with a flick of his hand.
Billy here knows only the dark, but when a brass band
came to play, he saw spectacular splashes of colour,

called them out, sure as could be: Red! Orange! Green!
Onto a bridleway now, trickier underfoot. But quieter, too.

*Hush, Billy, hush! That hu-hu is an owl. Of course
I remember: face like a plate, but when it’s airborne
it’s all swoop and grace. Woodwind notes.
Blue, you say? Well, who could argue? Blue it is.*