

HOW IT USED BE

I went down the High Street one Saturday night,
had nothing else better to do,
I thought "How it has changed since I was a boy"
from the old High Street that I once knew.
Not a stall to be seen it had all been swept clean,
to me it just wasn't the same.
every shop it was closed as through windows I
nosed,
in the end I was sorry I came.

I stood for a moment surveying the scene
as my sweet memories started to flow,
I went back fifty years, through the laughter
and tears,
to those days that I once used to know.
Up and down the long street trudged the tired,
aching feet
of the shoppers on Saturday night,
my mind still recalls hissing lamps on the stalls,
and the shops that were blazing with light.
Often in winter we'd trudge through the snow,
our fingers were numb with the cold,
heavy laden with shopping, and face all aglow,
those old days to me, they were gold.

As I close my eyes I can see it all now,
the shops where my Mum used to go,
Maypole the Dairy, Pearks, Titus Ward,
and to Clare's for Dad's bit of cod roe.
I remember quite well as this story I tell,
when the High Street was one busy throng,
the meat would not keep, so they sold it off cheap,
week-end joints, they would go for a song.
Outside of their shops the butchers would tout,
they were glad of your custom those days,
"Buy, buy, buy, buy" they would holler and shout,
while we used to stand there and gaze.
Auctions in those days, they were all the trend,
at prices that you could afford,

providing that you had a few bob to spend,
then you could live just like a lord.
Right to the end of the market we'd walk,
sometimes in the pouring rain,
for an aitch bone of beef, or a nice leg of pork,
oh for those days back again.

The Walthamstow Palace was packed like sardines,
there was always a queue there outside,
the Dominion, Granada, the Carlton and Queen's
that we used to look on with pride.
How good those times were compared to them now,
as we elbowed our way through the mob,
for apples, oranges, bananas and pears,
when the lot only came to a bob.
We would go into Manze's, Mum loved her
 stewed eels,
hot pie and mash she bought me,
then when we came out, to the Cock for a stout,
to my Mum it was her luxury.
'Tis the end of my story, I'm sorry to say,
as I make my way home, so forlorn,
still dreaming of how it all once used to be
 in that era in which I was born.
Fifty years have gone by, oh, how quickly they fly,
all I have now is my memory,
they were good, the old days, and still worthy
 of praise,
of the High Street that once used to be.

(from "A blast from the Past", by Dennis J Penfold)