

8th June 2020

Weeds

**“Our England is a garden, and such gardens are not made
By singing – ‘Oh, how beautiful!’ and sitting in the shade,
While better men than we go out and start their working lives
At grubbing weeds from gravel paths with broken dinner-knives.”**

Rudyard Kipling, The Glory of the Garden

It's been said: "A weed is a plant you don't want that's appeared in a place you don't want it to be." Unsightly weeds have begun to appear in copious quantities in our village in places we don't want them to be growing – between pavement-slabs and kerbs; along the bottom of walls; in gutters and around lamp-posts. Weeds are normally controlled by the Council Environmental Department. But, with cut-backs, redeployment, scarce resources and the lockdown, weed-clearing isn't happening. And, unwanted and unsightly weeds are the result.

For too long, the unsightly and unwanted weeds of racism and discrimination have been growing in the pavements and streets of our society. These are plants we do not like, and we will have said so on many occasions. But still they appear, in copious quantities, in places where we don't want them to be. It doesn't need me to spell out where and how that's happening. You know well enough where such weeds are.

Walking through my village, I got to asking, "Why isn't someone doing something?" "Isn't this a terrible time we're living in?" "Look at the state of the place?" But then I realised that *I* had a personal responsibility. I couldn't walk past the weeds any more. So I stopped and pulled a few of them up. It didn't make the village perfect, but at least it made a wee corner of it look better than it did before.

I can curse the weeds of racism, as I do often enough. I can sit in the shade and give myself to singing as I ignore the problem. Or I can do my bit to rid our society of the nasty things that have grown in places we don't want them to be – to stop, take responsibility, pull up a few weeds, and begin to make our pavements and streets look good again.

A prayer for today

Creator God, the garden of your world is spoiled when weeds are ignored. Let me stop and weed out hate and discrimination where they're not supposed to be. Amen.

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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