THE CENSUS OF 1861

COME all you ladies list to me,
I'll tell you about this fiddle de de;
The government has a jolly spree,
In reckoning up the Census.
There's Jane and Mary, and old Bet—
And lots of women that I forget—
There's Sal, that lives on heavy wet.
All crying about the Census.
Some women — oh, I blush to say,
And one that lives just over the way
Had a baby born the other day,
And she popped him on the Census.

So all you ladies must engage,
To tell the gents your proper age,
So do not be in such a rage.
You all must sign the Census.

An old lady, aged sixty-nine,
Swore she was just in her prime,
Combed out her hair and looked sublime,
Saying, I will chisel the Census.
Where was you married, my pretty chick?
And what's the age of Tom and Dick?
Why we jumped over a great broom stick,
Put that down in the Census.
Like honest people of one accord.
To pay the parson think it absurd,
So we took each other's word.
That's what tricks the Census.

There's Victoria, Jane, Maria, and all,
William and Jane, and little Ball,
There's hump-backed Bob, who had a fall,
All to fill the Census.
If you please, kind sir, what shall we do,
For we are in a terrible stew,
We're just a-going to trouble you,
To fill up this here Census.
My eldest girl is deaf and dumb,
And the old man's blind—a drinking rum—
And Jacky's gone to kingdom come,
You can put him in the Census.

Oh, as my old man he cannot see,
I get another man to sleep with me,
You must have a head of a family
To put it in the Census.

London is a funny place,
They try all ages here to trace,
So old ladies put on a old face,
To chisel the old Census.
Ten years ago they their names did sign,
Then young and tender and sublime,
They were thirty then, now twenty-nine.
It is the mistake of the Census.

Some children were not born at all,
But hatched like chickens under a wall
And they put down those not born at all,
For it all does for the Census.
These little secrets they must know,
You must tell the truth from top to toe,
To the gentlemen the gaff must blow,
To expose it in the Census.
Oh, if you have a little-come-by-chance,
That on your knee you're about to dance,
You must tell who's the father, if he's in France,
So, so much for the Census.

How many children? mam, says he,
Says she, only twenty-three,
And I'm only thirty-two, you see,
So put it in the Census.
Who is that young man, so tall and mild?
Says she, that is my dear grandchild.
I'm twenty-two, and then he smiled,
It will all fill up the Census.
Some are younger, I would let you know,
Then they were ten years ago;
They dress like lambs from top to toe,
To swindle the man with the Census.

An Irishman, named Jerry Noon,
Was just a-going to shoot the moon,
When a man walked up to Jerry's room,
Saying, my man, now sign the Census.
Jerry scratched his head and rubbed his eyes
Sure I can't write at all, he cries,
So just put down all with bugs and fleas,
They will all do for the Census.
There's Jerry Noon, and Judy, too,
And Barney what's gone up the flue,
There's Mike and Con, and the old pig, too
So to the devil take the Census.

Taylor, Printer, 92 & 93, Bric Lane,
Spitalfields.
A NEW SONG ON
THE CENSUS

O pay attention old and young,
And I will not detain you long,
I am going to sing a comic song,
And all about the Census.
According to the Government plan
Every woman, child, and man,
That slept in your house on Sunday night,
No matter whether black or white,
Old or young, blind or lame,
Wise or crazy, all the same,
On the 3rd of April what a game,
They had to be put in the Census.

Every one on Sunday night,
Wise and witty, wrong or right,
Brown and yellow, black and white,
They had to be put in the Census.

You'd to give your christian and surname,
Where you was born from where you came
And if blind, deaf, dumb or lame,
It had to be put in the Census.
Your rank, profession, and what you do,
Whether you're married or single too,
If you didn't put these particulars down,
You were under a penalty of £5.
If a widow or widower, you had to say,
And give your age from last birthday,
And if girls are in a particular way,
It had to be put in the Census.

There was Michael, Murphy, Dan and Pat
Three hens, a cock, a dog, and a cat,
Will sleep in the house on Sunday night,
If every thing goes well and right,
But the bugs and fleas so nip and bite,
They ought to be put in the Census.

In —— street there's some old dame,
From the Hickney, Hockney, island came,
And she has got the funniest name,
That will be in the Census.
It takes 90 letters her name to spell,
And how to pronounce it old Nick can't tell
She was left a widow in sixty-one
With 12 young daughters and a son,
Two is in France, and two's in Spain,
Three's troubled with water on the brain,
Four's in Walton gaol, and three insane,
What a jolly fine lot for the Census.

There's one old woman name Betty Bright,
See didn't understand it right,
She filled up her form on Thursday night,
And put this into the Census.
At Bullock's smithy I was born,
At five o'clock one bright May morn,
Last birthday I was just three score,
And children I've had twenty four,
Fifteen are living nine is dead,
Twelve are single, three is wed,
And two on Thursday got there bed,
Just in time for the Census.

John White, Printer, Rose Place,
Scotland Road, Liverpool.

46
Mary Turner writes:

The 'New Census Song' interests me. It is published in Liverpool — at least printed in Liverpool, and is the usual style, full of errors and contrivings in order to find a rhyme, but when it mentions Bullock's smithy I began to wonder if it is local to here because Bullock Smithy is the old name for the district of Hazel Grove, near Stockport. There could be other smithies for bullocks or smiths called Bullock, for aught I know, but perhaps some reader knows.

The census comment about Billy Brown putting everybody down including the dog and the cat is not as daft as it seems. Years ago I was going round Levenshulme checking on voters' register returns around October, in readiness for the new register, and I had a completed form which showed about seventeen people in one house. The family, of course, was Irish. Mother answered the door and she was nursing a baby. It transpired that there was herself and her husband, three lodgers and one of her own children eligible to vote when he reached 18. The rest were all her own children down to the babe in arms, with the exception of the last one, called Tricia. Having crossed off the babe in arms I said to her "And who is Tricia?", and she said "Tricia, Tricia! Ah, here she is" — and down the lobby came a blasted white poodle. This happened to me and is not transmitted via somebody else. As a matter of fact, doing that job at that time was good basic education for anybody in the history business. It fosters a necessary doubt.

Acknowledgements

Census 1861 — Manchester Central Reference Library; Language and Literature Library GB267.

A new song of the census — Manchester Central Reference Library; Local History Library, BR.f.821 04 Ba Vol.4 No. 247.