

Frederick Worms

This is the tale of Frederick Worms
Whose parents weren't on speaking terms,
So when Fred wrote to Santa Claus
It was in duplicate because
One went to Dad and one to Mum,
Both asking for Plutonium.
See the result: Father and Mother
Without consulting one another,
Purchase two lumps of largish size
Intending them as a surprise,
Which met in Frederick's stocking and
Lay level ten square miles of land.
Learn from this dismal tale of fission
Not to mix science and superstition.

By Humphrey Kay (1923 – 2009)

'Frederick Worms' was penned by Humphrey for a competition in the New Statesman in December 1949.

It was written as a cautionary tale for both parents and children in the style of Belloc.

Five years later Humphrey heard a technician in his lab reading the poem out from the William Hickey column in the Daily Express where the journalist was trying to track down the name of the author.

Someone then attempted to claim it as his own (having previously published it in the courier anonymously).

When tackled by Humphrey about plagiarising his work, the chap said:
"Oh well, I thought it was such a good poem, that it shouldn't be lost."

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