

APOCALYPSE 1914-18

I have heard the soldiers singing,
Pure young voices strong and true
I have heard them speak of valour
Each man the others must outdo

I have watched them march to battle
With final thoughts of home and wives
Realising - for the first time
They now are fighting for their lives.

I have seen life standing – leering
While death fondled his barbarous knife;
Heard Apocalyptic horsemen echoing
Hauntingly through halls of night.

I have smelt the devil`s rank breath
Rasping harsh through nostrils flared,
His fiendish riders stealing by me
Stalking their prey with sabers bared.

I have watched the victims stiffen,
Petrified by loathsome scenes
Sheering through this realm of terror
A figment of evil, demented dreams.

I have wept for souls returning
Floundering relics of mankind
Condemned to a living hell they wander
Seeking a peace they cannot find.

And on .. and on - time after time.

I REMEMBER

I remember days long gone;
Hazy peat smoke hanging
Over whitewashed cottages
With brown thatched roofs.
Brass-bridled horses pulling ploughs;
Blinkered, nodding, steadily plodding;
Scooping fertile furrows of rich dark loam
From within an earth
At last emerging from its puberty.
The farmer clad in baggy dungarees,
Scans the track ahead with narrowed eye.
Then, with skillful touch, his hands
- blue veined upon the reins,
Command the strong, submissive beast
To trudge that narrow lane
And plough his chosen lane.
I remember patchwork fields,
Nature's mosaic; a woven tapestry
With rustic shades of green and brown,
A tableau to passing seasons of the year.
Amazed, I watched them turn to gold,
A rolling sea of ripening ears.
Then, as summer's sun sank low
And autumn's misty halo glowed,
The thresher and the harvesters moved in.
Rats ran helter-skelter seeking sanctuary
And only stubble stalks remained
Awaiting winter's final icy mow.

ABATTOIR

Shambling, beleaguered soldiers,
Ragged boots - satanic dreams,
Undergo incessant horror;
Tortuous moans and dying screams.
A wretched, weary company
Of dehumanized mankind
With no respite from brutality
To renew demented minds.
Praying vainly for oblivion
To erase the horror from their eyes
Of this incessant, moral duty
That will finally brutalize.

The gaunt figure of a trooper
With ravaged, gas-seared lungs
Collapses in the trench, exhausted;
Doomed and certainly unsung.
His pain-contorted features bleakly
Focus on a shifting, bloody puddle,
Lying foetal crouched with comrades
In this sodden muddy huddle.
The `whomp` of bursting shells
Pounds a perpetual tattoo;
Abject, he watches circles in the puddle
Ripple, flatten then renew.
Each detonation`s cascading debris
Showers our trench with mud and glar.
Then the soldier`s final whimper
Shudders through this sordid abattoir.

THE HOMELESS MIND

Sometimes when you awake in some new place,
Disoriented in dawn`s bright, timeless space,
And for a second - gasping - wonder where you are.
Imagine if that shock that shook your senses to their core
Plagued you every dawn from this day on - what hell!
Groping for those intimate things you knew so well;
That old tweed jacket; those, well-worn shoes,
Distracted! - Searching for your favourite shirt,
Now where in God`s name is the loo?
Long established paths- tasks followed without thought;
Those daily rituals gone, now everything is fraught!
Then a stranger takes my hand,
Her warm and friendly smile is one I do not recognise,
Yet, intuitively, I realize
She must be someone I know very well
And have for quite a while.
Confused and puzzled, frequently frustrated now,
Chaotic thoughts swirl through my manic mind
Where a lifetime`s memories were stored, refined.
Actions - mainly repetitious in a brain that`s turned malicious,
A scrambled set of synapses that will not realign.
Yet, occasional flickers of awareness flare - just for a time.
Periods of acute insight evoking grief; emotive pain,
That final twist of the knife, a last sadistic crime;
The knowledge that what once was will never be again.