

Rocca San Giovanni

It is quiet here now, the valley is silent.
Only the birds and the stream have their noise,
The twittering, bubbling sweet sounds of nature.
Apart from this – silence which nothing destroys.

The smell is a faint one of morning and pine trees,
Of bracken and water, of woodland and stream,
The sight is of rushes, of mill house and lime trees.
The feel is of peacefulness sweet as a dream.

But at one time this valley, this valley of heaven,
Became a most torturous valley of hell.
For the fighting was bitter, the Hun held on grimly,
Regardless of losses, and many men fell.

For the British came north and the silence was shattered,
By rifle – machine gun – trench mortar – grenade.
The Messerschmitt diving brought sickening terror,
The valley vibrated with Death's serenade.

But the British advanced and the valley was taken,
The fighting moved northward as Gerry moved back,
And the only remains to give proof of the fighting,
Are freshly dug graves at the side of the track.

Again it is peaceful, the valley is silent,
Only the birds and the stream have their noise,
The twittering, bubbling sounds of nature.
Apart from this – silence which nothing destroys.

George Fraser Gallie, November, 1943.

Threnody of the Nations

We have hated and fought,
We have murdered and fled,
But the peace that we sought
Is alone with the dead.

We have offered ourselves
On the altar of greed;
We have poisoned our sons
With our venomous creed.

We have bombed and destroyed;
We have raped and diseased,
Till the earth has grown dark
With our war-obsequies.

We have sung our wild song
In the ghouls' jubilee,
And, O Love, once again
We have crucified Thee.

Leon Adams
Lennoxville, Quebec, May 16, 1940.

Tea at Olivier's

We shall have tea at Olivier's and eat
patisserie francaise
served by a waitress
in blue dress,
white apron, and
white cap.

We shall sip hot tea
and chat about
the battle of Britain,
the latest German move,
our men,
our lovers,
and our hopes.

We shall drink tea
while bombs tear out the hearts
of twisted men;
we shall eat
patisserie francaise
while they are tasting
Death.

Leon Adams
Sherbrooke, Quebec, 29 November 1940.

"Wish me luck..."

She waits
In the late twilight,
Shivering in the wind
That scoops up
Over the lip
Of the chalk cliff.

She waits,
Listening to the
Throb of the
Wimpy's engines
As the squadron nears
Her look-out post.

She waits
For a glimpse of a
Gauntleted hand
Waving at her eye level,
The hand that caressed
Now ready to trigger the tail guns.

She waits,
Keeping watch
Ears straining to catch
The returning flight,
Waiting to count the returned
And the missing.

She waits
Past the dawn...
Waits for the missing...
Waits...
And waits...
And waits.

Clare Stewart
20 October, 2002

The Click of the Garden Gate

I hear the click of the garden gate
But it is not he
He comes no more either early or late
To his dinner or tea
He is far away in an Air Force Camp
Learning to fight
(I wonder if his blankets are damp
And if he sleeps well at night)

Not twenty years when went away
Just a boy
He may never again come back to stay
To delight and annoy
Will what he has gained balance what he has lost?
He will change
Will his growth to manhood improve him most?
Or make him change?

I open the casement into his room
So tidy and neat
And the sun shines in and chases the gloom
And the wind blows sweet
Ready for him when, early or late
He comes back home to the sea
I hear the click of the garden gate
But it is not he.
(Perhaps it is Rene coming to tea!)

May Hill, December 1940

Hitler was a Killer

Hitler was a Killer, who killed our British men
Upon the Beaches of Dunkirk, he killed so Many Men

Upon the mighty Battlefield he never showed a tear
He sent them off to prison camps which filled them full of fear

He whipped the Jew he gassed the Jew until so many were dead

He fought to be the Führer but his path was hell instead.

Steve Petch at the age of 11

Death of a Hero

Clothes soaked with blood, and blood on his boots
As he breaths he gurgles blood
He lays in the shadow cast by a wall of stone
A million miles from home
Eyes wide with fright. His brothers by his side.
He quietly prays as he slowly dies
As blood drains from his body, colour leaves his face
His blood waters the flowers in this God forsaken place
They hold him so he doesn't die alone.
They hold him until they have to bag him and send him home.
Tears leave streaks down a dirty face
Sorrow and emptiness now takes his place
With the utmost care they zip up the big black bag
and wrap his body in an American flag.
A hero is going home.

Steve Carlsen

Home-Coming

A great bird lands and
Gathers strength after its flight.
Her oviduct contracts,
Discharging precious cargo,
Covered in a bright membrane.

It is carried shoulder-high
By adopted brothers.
This offspring,
Once nurtured in a mother's womb,
Now enveloped in wood.

Safe from life's buffeting,
It is sterile.
Nothing will erupt from its shell.
Instead, it focuses a nation's awe,
The nidus of a family's grief.

Richard Y. Ball