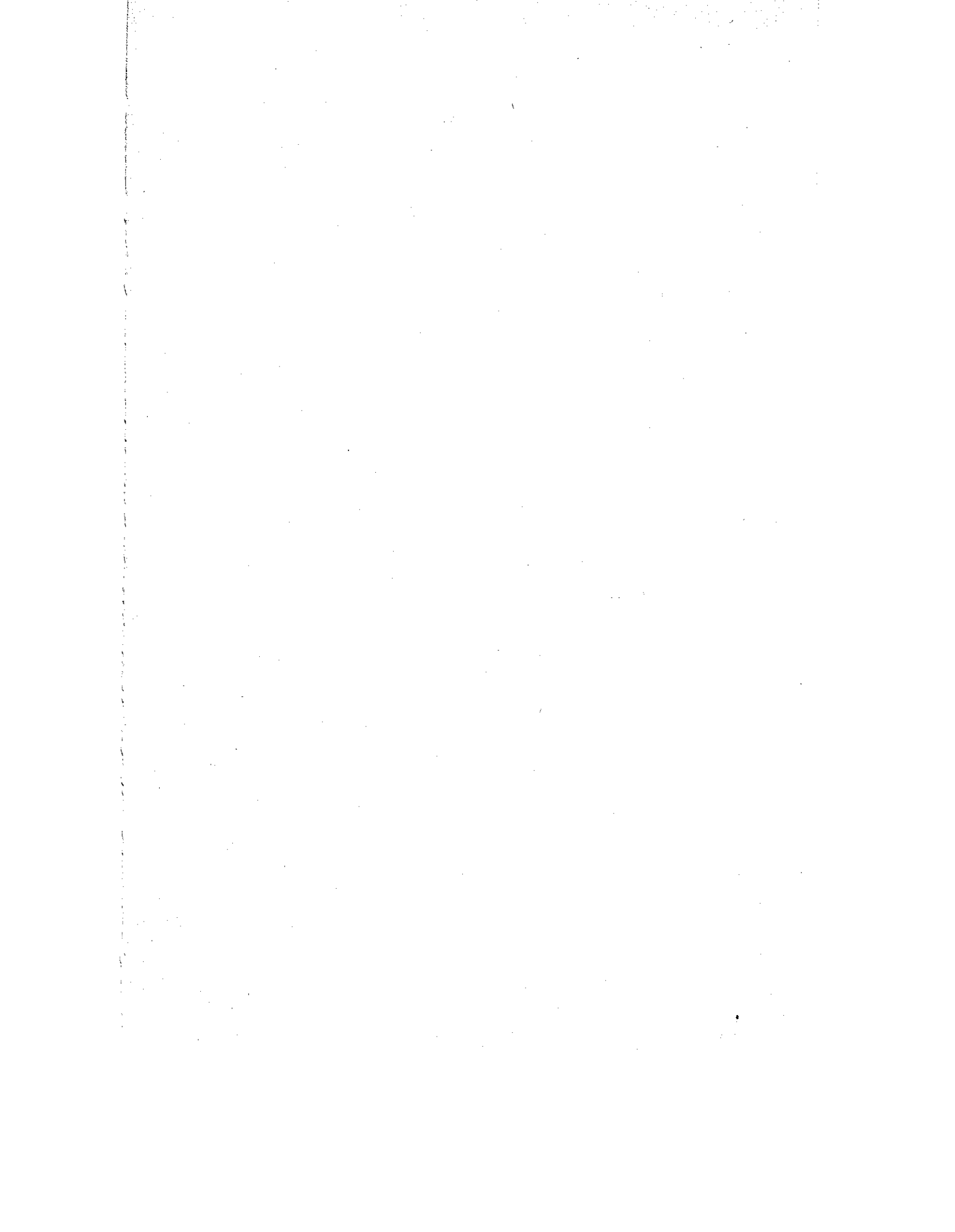


PART II
IN APRIL ONCE, AND OTHER POEMS

III
FROM A SOLDIER'S NOTEBOOK



A VOLUNTEER'S GRAVE

Not long ago it was a bird
In vacant, lilac skies
Could stir the sleep that hardly closed
His laughing eyes.

But here, where murdering thunders rock
The lintels of the dawn,
Although they shake his shallow bed
Yet he sleeps on.

Another spring with rain and leaf
And buds serenely red,
And this wise field will have forgot
Its youthful dead.

And, wise of heart, who loved him best
Will be forgetting, too,
Even before their own beds gleam
With heedless dew.

Yet what have all the centuries
Of purpose, pain, and joy
Bequeathed us lovelier to recall
Than this dead boy!

NIGHT OFF GALLIPOLI

(EIGHT SPIRIT SONGS)

1

A delirious voice:

Sweeter than sleep and the dream of death
To float on the flow of the tempest's breath —
A leaf in the lift of the air's caresses,
A bloom in the sway of the sea's brown tresses,
A bird that the hawk of the storm possesses!
Death, thou art best,
Being rest.

2

Voice of a youthful Turk:

If only up the straits the tempest flew,
Up the blue waters, past the perilous spray
To where the clustered cypresses are blue
Above pale stairs that touch the lipping bay,
I should not care, I should not greatly care —
If only up the straits the tempest flew!

If only up the straits my spirit flew
As once it flew when sails were all my wings,
To that deep garden where the moon is blue
And sea-sounds soften close-lipped whisperings,
I should not care, I should not greatly care —
If only up the straits my spirit flew!

Death could not keep me from the arms of you,
 But I should die again upon your mouth
 While all the swaying garden changed from blue
 To red, and softer grew your bosom's south.
 I should not care, I should not greatly care,
 Dying again upon the mouth of you!

3

An English voice:

I knew the stars would come,
 Brighter than English stars
 And purer than the stars of battle!
 They shine on Thessaly,
 On the pale Argive plain,
 And leave a lovelier light on Lesbos.

O Grecian stars, how oft
 At home, in the grey sea,
 I longed to know the lands ye guard!
 Now death, propitious, speeds
 My soul on those dark tides
 Whose foam ye lit when Helen fled.

Blow, wind of Tauris, blow!
 This is the sea that heard
 The Lesbian's cry, and further south
 The shining song of him
 Whose heart was washed with tears.
 O southward blowing wind, blow on!

4

Voice of a Breton Fisherman:

Douarnenez! Douarnenez!
 O little town on the fishing bay!
 O southern sea, too soft, too blue,
 Let me thro'! let me thro'!
 Till the green and the cold of the western sea
 And the lonely cliffs of Brittany
 And home, my home, Douarnenez,
 Break on mine eyes with the breaking day!

5

Voice of an English poet:

South! . . . These stars I know! . . . And south is Greece!
 O Death, one gentleness I pray —
 Let me find rest on that divine, sweet shore,
 And have for spirit-home some strip of Hellas!
 Some mountain cove in hearing of the sea,
 Some fabled fold, perhaps, of Helicon,
 Trod once by silver feet, now silvery
 With heliotrope and sprinkled sheep,
 There bide in quiet death's prepared event. . . .
 After the snows, when April nights grow warm
 And lilies of the moon blanch field and crag,
 When tenderly the wind blows down from Thessaly,
 And dews are deep, and down the mountains glide
 On feather feet the drifting dreams
 Whose land is not the land of sleep —
 Ah, then, perhaps, the spirit that incited so
 My heart to song in earthlier days,
 Balked of the dear delight of utterance,

Muted beyond all hope of speech,
May tinge with sharper longing the lament
Of that sole bird that sings unto his heart,
Or deeper dye the coral-mouthèd blooms
That hide but do not hush the river's brink. . . .

6

A Canadian voice:

God, God, how well they meant,
How utterly they failed!
Why wilt Thou give us strength,
Courage and fortitude,
But leave us without reason, impotent?

They poured us out like water.
The thirsty ground still drank,
And still they poured; until
The hills above the sea
Were red as sunset, but unconquered still.

Such blood, so young, so proud!
No Homer will rise up
To sing their deeds; for deeds
There be too great for song,
And heroes must be few to stir the rage.

All Canada was Ajax,
And India, to a man,
As fierce as Hector was!
The young isles of the south
Blazed like Achilles when they killed his friend.

And all for what? For nothing!
 We, who in the west
 Had crossed perhaps the Rhine,
 Have crossed but Lethe here,
 And won but failure for our only fame.

There never was a cause
 So worthy to be won!
 If France and England die,
 Freedom and faith are dead —
 Give them, O God, not heroes' hearts, but brains!

7

Voice of a French poet:

And so the songs must go unsung,
 The dreams be only dreams. . . .
 But I have died for France! There is no fate
 So worthy them her august blood endues. . . .
 When all is said, what is the poet's life?
 The vulture's ebb between sky ecstasy
 And carrion of earth! Raptured, superb,
 He wheels against the sun, then falls
 And battens on the refuse beasts refuse!
 Somewhere i' the compound, rainbow stuff
 And sunset-cloud and green-winged spray,
 There creeps the taint, the particle of earth,
 That marks it with the black of madness, sin, or quirk.
 Only the great are phoenix of the sun,
 Unfathered save of flame and dizzy light;

They only keep, unpausingly and pure,
The blue enfeoffments of their gorgeous sire.

Say I had lived; which height had I attained?
The vulture's? Or the phoenix' flaming zone?
Death makes all questions foolish now. . . .
Yet in my soul I know there was a thing in me
Of most immortal lineaments,
Whose speech was beauty and whose thought was
prayer! . . .

But even so, a year, a hundred years,
A thousand — the loveliest words of men
Are leaves with but a redder tint to time.
The singers pass; the song endures: I die;
But somewhere will gush up the crimson fire
That lit my heart to songs I might not sing.
And there was France to die for! A splendor's there
Beyond the dimming of eternity!
Who would be singer now, not soldier, who
Would live for Fame when he could die for France,
Fame, too, I must believe, will scorn as bastard. . . .
She had no need of songs who asked my life.
Songs! Here was a deed to do
More gracious and more splendid than all songs!
And I have done that deed;
And I am well content.

8

A host of spirits:

We fought and saw the stars and fell.
To fight and win were better;
To fight and fall is well.

Perhaps a god directed so
We should be overcome;
Perhaps; we may not know.

We knew the trumpet call of life;
We knew the call was not
To victory, but strife.

And if, indeed, no god there be
That hung the stars we saw,
Yet we who fought, yea, we

Who died, out on the bloody sod,
We know beyond all doubt
In us there was a god.

Strong Spirit, who hast wrought
A fighting world for men,
Take us; like men we fought.

SWALLOWS

(PARIS -- MAY, 1918)

Over the roofs the swallows fly
In the quiet evening air.
Though just above the homes of men,
They have not any care.

The women on the balconies,
That watch and seem to see,
The birds could touch them with their wings,
They stand so quietly.

So quietly! But if the birds
Had cognizance of pain,
Could hear the prayers that quiver past,
They would not fly again.

POPPY FIELDS

You say this poppy blooms so red
Because its roots were daily fed
On last year's cold and festering dead?

Such is the blessed way of earth;
Oblivious, intent on mirth,
To turn rank death to gorgeous birth!

Even this brutal agony,
So hideous, so foul, will be
Romance to others, presently.

And would it not be proud romance
Falling in some obscure advance
To rise, a poppy field of France?

ON LEAVE

I have reached a green, green island
In a sea without a shore.
Behind the grey waves crumble,
And I will not look before.

Here there are music and leisure
And the touch of a tender hand;
Here is my golden river
And the warm, wide river land.

I am safe to-day, if never;
They have given me love and rest;
Sailing the sea of sorrow
I have touched at the isle of the blest.

TO C. P.

Her spirit's loveliness was such
Her body's loveliness I could not see;
I only know her eyes were heavenly blue
That now are grey with tears for me.

IN FRANCE

Let not a foreign earth weigh down my head,
Nor mingle with the dust that was my heart!
Lay me among my own when I am dead,
In my own land, eternally a part
Of all I know and love. I could not sleep
With strangers here, and there is aching need
Of sleep after much weariness, and deep
Were mine at home. It is a place, indeed,
For long, untroubled sleep. All summer there
The pale somnambulists of heaven pass
Immense and silver through the turquoise air,
Trailing their purple garments on the grass.

Though friendless, childless, honorless I come,
They will know I am theirs; they will make room.

THE SOLDIER GENERATION

We are the sons of disaster,
Deserted by gods that are named,
Thrust in a world with no master,
Our altars prepared but unclaimed;
Wreathed with the blood-purple aster,
Victims, foredoomed, but untamed.

Behold, without faith we were fashioned,
Bereft the assuaging of lies;
Thirsty for dreams we have passioned,
Yet more for truth that denies;
Aware that no powers compassioned,
We have turned to our hearts and grown wise.

Leisure we loved and laughter;
Our portion is labor and pain;
For home we are given a rafter
Of wind and a lintel of rain,
And all that our hearts followed after
Is taken and naught doth remain.

Yet never a new generation
But shall live by the battle we fight,
And prosper of our immolation
And reap of our anguish, delight.
Accepting the great abnegation
We are fathers, not children, of light.

Bruised with the scourges of sorrow,
Broke with the terrible rod,
Bidden for respite to borrow
A poppy-red swathe of the sod,
Yet this is our hope — that to-morrow
Will yield of our strivings, God.

AFTER ANY BATTLE

Voice of Earth:

These are my children's voices! Born
Not of the sun, who, for a heritage,
Giveth a light wherewith to see, a fire
To burn away the dross gat from my loins;
Nor of the moon whose sons are mad with beauty;
Nor of the stars, for they, thro' change and drift,
Behold the steadfast heavens and the pole.
But these are mine, unfathered and unclaimed,
Sustained by shining from no sun nor moon
Nor fixed nor vagrant star.
Yea, they are mine —
Dust that is black with my ferocious blood
And brackish with my tears.
Their days are short at best, and they return
With shuddering to my bosom's dark, yet now
They rob each other of the little years their due,
And choke the houses of the whimpering dead!
And why? O why?
Another's folly wrought this holocaust,
Calling it falsely by a sacred name,
Turning the shambles to an altar stone,
And butchery to sacrifice!

THE SQUIRE

I have sung me a stave, a stave or two,
I have drunk me a stoop of wine,
I have roystered across a world that was dew
And a sea that was sunlight and brine.

And now I'll go down where the need is not
Of a singing heart, but a sword;
I'll fight where the dead men welter and rot
With the hard-pressed hosts of the Lord.

And should I come back again, 'twill be
With accolade and spurs,
And many a tale of chivalry,
And the deeds of warriors.

And should I not, O break for me
No buds nor funeral boughs —
I go with the noblest company
That ever death did house.

FOR THEM THAT DIED IN BATTLE

(1914-1918)

How blossomy must be the halls of Death
Against the coming of the newly dead!
How sweet with woven garlands gatherèd
From pastures where the pacing stars take breath!
And with what tender haste, each with his wreath
Of welcome, must the elder dead return
To greet about the doors with dear concern
These much-loved, proud-eyed farers from beneath.
For these that come, come not forspent with years,
Nor bent with long despair, nor weak with tears,
They mount superbly thro' the gold-flecked air,
The light of immolation in their eyes,
The green of youth eternal in their hair,
And Honor's music on them like sunrise,

THE FARM AGAIN

(TO THE 37TH DIVISION)

The dreamy rain comes down,
And cotton's in the grass.
The farmers all complain —
But I watch armies pass. . . .

The ones that did not come
From Ivoirry again
Are marching down the road
And whistling in the rain.

The forty-two I saw
In Olsene, prone and pale,
With packs and helmets on
Pass by me, young and hale.

I hear their laughter plain —
Some blasphemous, quaint jest
That livens up their step
More than an hour's rest.

They talk of Montfaucon,
Of Thielt and Chryshautem;
My cotton rows, it seems,
Are turnip fields to them.

It's hard to stay indoors
With soldiers marching by.

And if you've hiked and fought
It's hard until you die.

.
Dim Flanders rain comes down,
The cotton's in the grass;
But I watch wistfully
Gay phantom armies pass.

AN EPISTLE FROM CORINTH

Paul of Tarsus, I have enquired of Jesus
And meditated much and read your words
Directed to the wise Corinthians
Of whom am I. There is much beauty in
His life and therefore comfort, and there is beauty
In that unreasoning rush of eloquence
Of yours, so much it almost caught me up
And made me Christian. Such is the power of faith
Ablaze in one we know to be no fool
I watched you as you preached that day in Athens:
You are no fool, nor saint, but one I judge
Of intellect that somehow has caught fire
And so misleads when it is shiningest.

I had hoped to find in you or in your Christ
Some answer to the questions that unanswered
Slay our wills. . . . There's so much lost!
Parnassus there across the turquoise gulf
Still holds its rose and snow to the blown sun,
But no young Phoebus guides the golden car,
Nor will the years' returning loveliness
For all its perfumed broidure bring again
The Twelve to the bright mountain place they loved.
The gods of Greece are dead, forever dead:
The Romans substitute idolatry;
And there's such peace and idleness in the world
As gives the thinking powers full scope to soar,

And soar they do, but in red-beakèd bands
That darken all the sun and nurture find
On the Promethean bare heart of man.
How strange to see the labor of the world
Straining for plenteous food and drink and warmth,
For ease and freedom and the right to choose,
But winning these win only doubt and anguish!
Is this accessory to our coming here?
Is there no answer waiting to be found?

I judge the struggle for perfection if
Engaged in long enough, say thro' the years
Of gorgeous youth, the ashen middle years,
Will end in calm, a kind of stale content —
No gush and quiver in the leafless tree!
But that's the body's dying, not the fight's
Reward, old age not victory!
Yet who, save those few souls and stern
That passionate unto perfection walk
The alien earth scornful and sure,
Would pledge themselves to life-long virtue
Except exchanged for happiness, here
Or hereafter? Who, I ask and hear no answer.
'Twas for the few that Socrates had thought:
Your Jesus had profounder bitterness
And, wrath against a universal woe,
Conceived a universal anodyne —
Heaven, his father's Kingdom, Paradise.

Hence his success with slave and sick and poor —
The solace for their skimped experience