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Opening extract from
Poems from the First World War
Published in Association with
Imperial War Museums

Compiled by
Gaby Morgan

Published by
Macmillan Children's Books

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First published 2013 by Macmillan Children's Books
a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited
20 New Wharf Road, London N1 9RR
Basingstoke and Oxford
Associated companies throughout the world
www.panmacmillan.com

ISBN 978-1-4472-2616-1

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1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from
the British Library.

Typeset by Kate Warren
Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

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*For Polly Nolan, Suzanne Carnell
and Jackie McCann*

CONTENTS

ENGLAND TO HER SONS	
<i>W. N. Hodgson</i>	1
GLIMPSE	
<i>W. N. Hodgson</i>	2
<i>from</i> MEN WHO MARCH AWAY	
<i>Thomas Hardy</i>	3
HAPPY IS ENGLAND NOW	
<i>John Freeman</i>	4
BEFORE ACTION	
<i>W. N. Hodgson</i>	6
THE CALL	
<i>Jessie Pope</i>	8
DRILLING IN RUSSELL SQUARE	
<i>Edward Shanks</i>	10
GOING IN TO DINNER	
<i>Edward Shanks</i>	12
THE CALL	
<i>W. N. Hodgson</i>	13
THE SEND-OFF	
<i>Wilfred Owen</i>	15
THE SOLDIER	
<i>Rupert Brooke</i>	17
ON RECEIVING NEWS OF THE WAR	
<i>Isaac Rosenberg</i>	18
BREAKFAST	
<i>W. W. Gibson</i>	20

PEACE	
<i>Rupert Brooke</i>	21
FOR THE FALLEN	
<i>Laurence Binyon</i>	22
THE DEAD	
<i>Rupert Brooke</i>	24
MANGEL-WURZELS	
<i>W. W. Gibson</i>	25
THE VOLUNTEER	
<i>Herbert Asquith</i>	26
FIELD MANOEUVRES	
<i>Richard Aldington</i>	27
FROM A FLEMISH GRAVEYARD	
<i>I. A. Williams</i>	29
FLANDERS	
<i>Willoughby Weaving</i>	31
THE CHERRY TREES	
<i>Edward Thomas</i>	32
MARCHING (AS SEEN FROM THE LEFT FILE)	
<i>Isaac Rosenberg</i>	33
NOON	
<i>Robert Nichols</i>	34
THE FALLING LEAVES	
<i>Margaret Postgate Cole</i>	36
'MY BOY JACK' 1914–18	
<i>Rudyard Kipling</i>	37
A SON	
<i>Rudyard Kipling</i>	38

'WHEN YOU SEE MILLIONS OF THE MOUTHLESS DEAD'	
<i>Charles Sorley</i>	39
BACK	
<i>W. W. Gibson</i>	40
A LISTENING POST	
<i>R. E. Vernède</i>	41
ANNIVERSARY OF THE GREAT RETREAT (1915)	
<i>Isabel C. Clarke</i>	43
FLANDERS FIELDS	
<i>Elizabeth Daryush</i>	45
THE DESERTER	
<i>Winifred Letts</i>	46
THE TWO MOTHERS	
<i>Matilda Betham-Edwards</i>	48
THIS IS NO CASE OF PETTY RIGHT OR WRONG	
<i>Edward Thomas</i>	49
BREAK OF DAY IN THE TRENCHES	
<i>Isaac Rosenberg</i>	51
REPORTED MISSING	
<i>Anna Gordon Keown</i>	53
IN MEMORIAM (EASTER 1915)	
<i>Edward Thomas</i>	54
ALL THE HILLS AND VALES ALONG	
<i>Charles Sorley</i>	55
INTO BATTLE	
<i>Julian Grenfell</i>	58
ROUEN	
<i>May Wedderburn Cannan</i>	61

PERHAPS	
<i>Vera Brittain</i>	68
BEFORE THE SUMMER	
<i>E. A. Mackintosh</i>	70
BEAUCOURT REVISITED	
<i>A. P. Herbert</i>	72
THE LAST LAUGH	
<i>Wilfred Owen</i>	75
SOLDIERS	
<i>F. S. Flint</i>	76
THE OWL	
<i>Edward Thomas</i>	78
TO MY BROTHER	
<i>Vera Brittain</i>	79
RENDEZVOUS	
<i>Alan Seeger</i>	80
‘SINCE THEY HAVE DIED’	
<i>May Wedderburn Cannan</i>	82
LAMPLIGHT	
<i>May Wedderburn Cannan</i>	83
DESPAIR	
<i>Olive E. Lindsay</i>	85
LIGHTS OUT	
<i>Edward Thomas</i>	87
OUT IN THE DARK	
<i>Edward Thomas</i>	89
THE TRUMPET	
<i>Edward Thomas</i>	91

AS THE TEAM’S HEAD BRASS	
<i>Edward Thomas</i>	93
ANTHEM FOR DOOMED YOUTH	
<i>Wilfred Owen</i>	95
SPRING 1917	
<i>Beatrice Mayor</i>	96
SEARCHLIGHT	
<i>F. S. Flint</i>	97
TO HIS LOVE	
<i>Ivor Gurney</i>	99
GREATER LOVE	
<i>Wilfred Owen</i>	101
BASE DETAILS	
<i>Siegfried Sassoon</i>	103
DULCE ET DECORUM EST	
<i>Wilfred Owen</i>	104
THE SILENT ONE	
<i>Ivor Gurney</i>	106
IN THE CHURCH OF ST OUEN	
<i>Siegfried Sassoon</i>	108
THE WIND ON THE DOWNS	
<i>Marian Allen</i>	109
RETURNING, WE HEAR THE LARKS	
<i>Isaac Rosenberg</i>	111
EASTER MONDAY	
<i>Eleanor Farjeon</i>	112
VLAMERTINGHE: PASSING THE CHÂTEAU, JULY, 1917	
<i>Edmund Blunden</i>	113

TROOPSHIP: MID-ATLANTIC	
<i>W. W. Gibson</i>	114
MENTAL CASES	
<i>Wilfred Owen</i>	115
CONVALESCENCE	
<i>Amy Lowell</i>	117
THE CONVALESCENT	
<i>Cicily Fox Smith</i>	118
SING A SONG OF WAR-TIME	
<i>Nina Macdonald</i>	121
MUNITION WAGES	
<i>Madeline Ida Bedford</i>	123
WAR GIRLS	
<i>Jessie Pope</i>	125
MANY SISTERS TO MANY BROTHERS	
<i>Rose Macaulay</i>	127
PICNIC	
<i>Rose Macaulay</i>	129
AT THE MOVIES	
<i>Florence Ripley Mastin</i>	132
AIR-RAID	
<i>W. W. Gibson</i>	133
TO TONY (AGED 3)	
<i>Marjorie Wilson</i>	134
STRANGE MEETING	
<i>Wilfred Owen</i>	136
ASSAULT	
<i>Erno Muller</i>	139

THE DUG-OUT	
<i>Siegfried Sassoon</i>	141
INSENSIBILITY	
<i>Wilfred Owen</i>	142
EXPOSURE	
<i>Wilfred Owen</i>	145
RAIN	
<i>Edward Thomas</i>	148
TWO VOICES	
<i>Edmund Blunden</i>	149
FUTILITY	
<i>Wilfred Owen</i>	150
MAGPIES IN PICARDY	
<i>T. P. Cameron Wilson</i>	151
GETHSEMANE (1914–18)	
<i>Rudyard Kipling</i>	154
GOING INTO THE LINE	
<i>Max Plowman</i>	156
SPRING OFFENSIVE	
<i>Wilfred Owen</i>	160
IN MEMORIAM	
<i>E. A. Mackintosh</i>	163
IN THE AMBULANCE	
<i>W. W. Gibson</i>	166
FROM THE SOMME	
<i>Leslie Coulson</i>	167
IN FLANDERS FIELDS	
<i>John McCrae</i>	169

AN IRISH AIRMAN FORESEES HIS DEATH	
<i>W. B. Yeats</i>	170
EVERYONE SANG	
<i>Siegfried Sassoon</i>	171
1916 SEEN FROM 1921	
<i>Edmund Blunden</i>	172
THE LAMENT OF THE DEMOBILIZED	
<i>Vera Brittain</i>	174
RECONCILIATION	
<i>Siegfried Sassoon</i>	175
ELEGY IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD	
<i>G. K. Chesterton</i>	176
AFTERMATH	
<i>Siegfried Sassoon</i>	177
INDEX OF FIRST LINES	181
INDEX OF POETS	187
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	189

ENGLAND TO HER SONS

Sons of mine, I hear you thrilling
To the trumpet call of war;
Gird ye then, I give you freely
As I gave your sires before,
All the noblest of the children I in love and
anguish bore.

Free in service, wise in justice,
Fearing but dishonour's breath;
Steeled to suffer uncomplaining
Loss and failure, pain and death;
Strong in faith that sees the issue and in hope that
triumpheth.

Go, and may the God of battles
You in His good guidance keep:
And if He in wisdom giveth
Unto His beloved sleep,
I accept it nothing asking, save a little space to
weep.

W. N. Hodgson

Written in August 1914

GLIMPSE

I saw you fooling often in the tents
With fair dishevelled hair and laughing lips,
And frolic elf lights in your careless eyes,
As who had never known the taste of tears
Or the world's sorrow. Then on the march
 one night,
Halted beneath the stars I heard the sound
Of talk and laughter, and glanced back to see
If you were there. But you stood far apart
And silent, bowed upon your rifle butt,
And gazed into the night as one who sees.
I marked the drooping lips and fathomless eyes
And knew you brooded on immortal things.

W. N. Hodgson

Written in June 1914

from MEN WHO MARCH AWAY

In our heart of hearts believing
 Victory crowns the just,
 And that braggarts must
 Surely bite the dust,
Press we to the field ungrieving,
In our heart of hearts believing
 Victory crowns the just.

Hence the faith and fire within us
 Men who march away
 Ere the barn-cocks say
 Night is growing gray,
Leaving all that here can win us;
Hence the faith and fire within us
 Men who march away.

Thomas Hardy

September 1914

HAPPY IS ENGLAND NOW

There is not anything more wonderful
Than a great people moving towards the deep
Of an unguessed and unfeared future; nor
Is aught so dear of all held dear before
As the new passion stirring in their veins
When the destroying dragon wakes from sleep.

Happy is England now, as never yet!
And though the sorrows of the slow days fret
Her faithfulest children, grief itself is proud.
Ev'n the warm beauty of this spring and summer
That turns to bitterness turns then to gladness
Since for this England the beloved ones died.

Happy is England in the brave that die
For wrongs not hers and wrongs so sternly hers;
Happy in those that give, give, and endure
The pain that never the new years may cure;
Happy in all her dark woods, green fields, towns,
Her hills and rivers and her chafing sea.

Whate'er was dear before is dearer now.
There's not a bird singing upon this bough
But sings the sweeter in our English ears:
There's not a nobleness of heart, hand, brain,
But shines the purer; happiest is England now
In those that fight, and watch with pride and tears.

John Freeman

1914

BEFORE ACTION

By all the glories of the day
And the cool evening's benison,
By that last sunset touch that lay
Upon the hills when day was done,
By beauty lavishly outpoured
And blessings carelessly received,
By all the days that I have lived
Make me a soldier, Lord.

By all of man's hopes and fears,
And all the wonders poets sing,
The laughter of unclouded years,
And every sad and lovely thing;
By the romantic ages stored
With high endeavour that was his,
By all his mad catastrophes
Make me a man, O Lord.

I, that on my familiar hill
Saw with uncomprehending eyes
A hundred of Thy sunsets spill
Their fresh and sanguine sacrifice,
Ere the sun swings his noonday sword
Must say goodbye to all of this; –
By all delights that I shall miss,
Help me to die, O Lord.

W. N. Hodgson