

Anthem for Doomed Youth by Wilfred Owen

*What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, –
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.*

*What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.*

Wilfred Owen spent part of his youth at his uncle's home in Clement Road, Wimbledon and in rented accommodation in Worple Road (1912)

Most of the poems for which Wilfred Owen is remembered were written between August 1917 and September 1918. The voice of a lost generation, he sought to express the horror of war and pity for his fellow man.

Having returned to the Western Front after a year of recuperation, Wilfred took part in the breaking of the Hindenburg Line at Joncourt (October 1918) and was awarded the Military Cross for his courage and leadership. He was killed on 4 November 1918 during the battle to cross the Sambre-Oise canal and is buried at Ors Communal Cemetery, France

Wilfred's poems were published after his death and continue to capture the public's imagination.

Extract from “Goodbye to All That” by Robert Graves.

We marched towards the flashes and could soon see the flare-lights curving over the trenches in the distance. The noise of the guns grew louder and louder. Then we were among the batteries. From behind us on the left of the road a salvo of four shells came suddenly over our heads. The battery was only about two hundred-yards away. This broke up Aberystwyth in the middle of a verse and set us off our balance for a few seconds; the column of fours tangled up. The shells went hissing away eastward; we could see the red flash and hear the hollow bang where they landed in German territory.

The men picked up their step again and began chaffing. A lance-corporal dictated a letter home: 'Dear auntie, this leaves me in the pink. We are at present wading in blood up to our necks. Send me fags and a life-belt...'

The roadside cottages were now showing more and more signs of dilapidation. A German shell came over and then whoo - oo - ooooooOOO - bump - CRASH! twenty yards away from the party. We threw ourselves flat on our faces.

Presently we heard a curious singing noise in the air, and then flop! flop! little pieces of shell-casing came buzzing down all around. 'They calls them the musical instruments,' said the sergeant. 'Damn them,' said Frank Jones-Bateman, who had a cut in his hand from a jagged little piece, 'the devils have started on me early.' 'Aye, they'll have a lot of fun with you before they're done, sir,' grinned the sergeant.

Another shell came over. Every one threw himself down again, but it burst two hundred yards behind us. Only Sergeant Jones had remained on his feet and laughed at us. 'You're wasting yourselves, lads,' he said to the draft. 'Listen by the noise they make coming where they're going to burst.'

Author and poet Robert Graves was born and raised at
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