

WAR POETRY

I Vow to Thee, My Country (Sir Cecil Spring Rice)

I vow to thee my country, all earthly things above.
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love.
The love that asks no question. The love that stands the test.
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best.
The love that never falters, the love that pays the price.
The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.

I vow to thee my country, all earthly things above.
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love.

And there's another country I've heard of long ago.
Most dear to them that love her. Most great to them that know.
We may not count her armies. We may not see her king.
Her fortress is a faithful heart. Her pride is suffering.
And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase.
And her ways are ways of gentleness, and all her paths are peace.

I heard my country calling away across the sea.
Across the waste of waters, she calls and calls to me.
Her love that asks no question.
Her love that stands the test.
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best.

I vow to thee, my country all earthly things above.
Entire and whole and perfect the service ...
The service of my love.

¹ *This version of Sir Cecil Spring Rice's hymn was placed by Beck Goldsmith.*

Dolce et Decorum Est (Wilfred Owen)

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of disappointed shells that dropped behind.

GAS! Gas! Quick, boys!-- An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time, --someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And floundering like a man in fire or lime.--
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,--
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.

¹ *Sweet and fitting it is to die for one's country. (Horace, Odes, III.ii.13)*