

Remembrance Day Poems

November 11, 2012

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Autumn Elegy (Leslie Norris) *read by Steven*

September. The small summer hangs its suns
On the chestnuts, and the world bends slowly
Out of the year. On tiles of the low barns
The lingering swallows rest in this timely

Warmth, collecting it. Standing in the garden,
I too feel its generosity; but would not leave.
Time, time to lock the heart. Nothing is sudden
In Autumn, yet the long, ceremonial passion of

The year's death comes quickly enough
As form veins shut on the sluggish blood
And the numberless protestations of the leaf
Are mapped on the air. Live wood

Was scarce and bony where I lived as a boy.
I am not accustomed to such opulent
Panoply of dying. Yet, if I stare
Unmoved at the flaunting, silent

Agony in the country before a resonant
Wind anneals it, I am not diminished, it is not
That I do not see well, do not exult,
But that I remember again what

Young men of my own time died
In the Spring of their living and could not turn
To this. They died in their flames, hard
War destroyed them. Now as the trees burn

In the beginning glory of Autumn
I sing for all green deaths as I remember
In their broken Mays, and turn
The years back for them, every red September.

IN FLANDERS FIELD *John McCrae read by Meredith*

**In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place: and in the sky
The larks still bravely singing fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.**

**We are the dead: Short days ago,
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved: and now we lie
In Flanders fields!**

**Take up our quarrel with the foe
To you, from failing hands, we throw
The torch: be yours to hold it high
If ye break faith with us who die,
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields**

*Composed at the battlefield on May 3, 1915
during the second battle of Ypres, Belgium*



"Comrades of the War Years" (Robert T. Anderson) *read by Steven*

Ye comrades of the war years
Who sleep so sound and still,
The sun is on the crosses,
And the Lark is on the hill,
We still have bitter memories
Of nights of rain or frost,
But ye left the battle early,
Ere we counted all the cost ••••

We tread again the home trails
The trails that once ye knew,
And now no glory waits us
But only tasks to do,
And still new conflicts face us
And still we 'carry on'
But we must face the twilight
And you left in the dawn •••

Old faces come about us
In silence of the night
Old forms that we remember
Were with us in the fight,
But the men with haggard faces
We meet with every day,
Are the ones who bring us anguish
That will not pass away.

The Click of the Garden Gate (May Hill, December 1940) *read by Meredith*

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...

"The Widow", C. J. Bunbury *read by Meredith*

The troops were slowly filing,

On a transport lying nigh,

She kissed him, bravely smiling-He

waved a bright good-bye.

To him the din of battle,

To him the joy of strife,

To her the baby's prattle,

To her the lonely life ••••

'Dear God, I've been so lonely,

My very best I've tried,

And is this my answer only,

The news that he has died.'

Go And See Vancouver (Quentin Mullin) *read by Steven*

There's still a Canada, but not for us.
Halifax still shines but it's not ours,
Ownership ends at the muddy grave.
Dead clocks rest still, there are no living hours
Banked and waiting for us bloodied brave.
We know the purple lilacs have just bloomed
But they are not for us to smell again –
We'll never re-see places where we've been.
And though more life was something we assumed
Would be ours, so we all thought we would win.
Regina's summer days can't thrill dead hearts,
And though we know that hearts are being thrilled
There is no jealousy or peace for us,
Emotions can't be picked up once they're spilled.
It's true your nation wears an awful scar
From cuts made deep in bloody Kandahar,
But Ottawa is still intact to see,
And Edmonton knows no insurgency.
So go and see Vancouver you who live
And have no remorse, there's nothing to forgive.
We ask not for your grief or gratitude
Or constant tribute of sad memories.
Blood will in conflicts be forever shed
So accept we were alive and now are dead.

June 28, 2010

Returning, We Hear the Larks (Isaac Rosenberg) *read by Meredith*

Sombre the night is.

And though we have our lives, we know

What sinister threat lurks there.

Dragging these anguished limbs, we only know

This poison-blasted track opens on our camp-

On a little safe sleep.

But hark! joy-joy-strange joy.

Lo! heights of night ringing with unseen larks

Music showering on our upturned list'ning faces.

Death could drop from the dark

As easily as song-

But song only dropped,

Like a blind man's dreams on the sand

By dangerous tides,

Like a girl's dark hair for she dreams no ruin lies there,

Or her kisses where a serpent hides.

KRIEGIE THOUGHTS - Author Unknown *read by Steven*

Barbed Wire! Barbed Wire! Barbed Wire!

To the North, South, West and East

Will it always hold me captive

Without hope or joy or peace

Must I ever curve this eager flame

That burns within my chest

Or know once more the joy of home

With pleasant hours of rest

Such questions to my mind do crowd

When deep in thought I sit

But ever with it comes the cry

It won't be long, don't quit

And so it goes from day to day

A never changing scene

But someday soon I will leave it all

As though it were a dream.

LAMENT (*Edna St. Vincent Millay, 1892-1950*) read by Meredith

LISTEN, children:
Your father is dead.
From his old coats
I'll make you little jackets;
I'll make you little trousers
From his old pants.
There'll be in his pockets
Things he used to put there,
Keys and pennies
Covered with tobacco;
Dan shall have the pennies
To save in his bank;
Anne shall have the keys
To make a pretty noise with.
Life must go on,
And the dead be forgotten;
Life must go on,
Though good men die;
Anne, eat your breakfast;
Dan, take your medicine;
Life must go on;
I forget just why.

His Father, Singing (Leslie Norris, 1921-2006) *read by Steven*

My father sang for himself,
out of sadness and poverty;
perhaps from happiness,
but I'm not sure of that.

He sang in the garden,
quietly, a quiet voice
near his wallflowers
which of all plants

he loved most, calling them
gillyflowers, a name
learned from his mother.
His songs came from a time

before my time, his boy's
life among musical brothers,
keeping pigeons, red and blue
checkers, had a racing cycle

with bamboo wheels. More often
he sang the songs he'd learned,
still a boy, up to his knees
in French mud, those dying songs.

He sang for us once only,
our mother away from the house,
the lamp lit, and I reading,
seven years old, already bookish,

at the scrubbed table.
My brother cried from his crib
in the small bedroom, teething,
a peremptory squall, then a long

wail. My father lifted from
the sheets his peevish child,
red-faced, feverish, carried
him down in a wool shawl

and in the kitchen, holding
the child close, began to sing.

Quietly, of course, and swaying
rhythmically from foot to foot,

he rocked the sobbing boy.
I saw my brother's head,
his puckered face, fall
on my father's chest. His crying

died away, and I
read on. It was my father's
singing brought my head up.
His little wordless lullabies

had gone, and what he sang
above his baby's sleep
was never meant
for any infant's comfort.

He stood in the bleak kitchen,
the stern, young man, my father.
For the first time raised
his voice, in pain and anger

sang. I did not know his song
nor why he sang it. But stood
in fright, knowing it important,
and someone should be listening.