Come on, My Lucky Lads By Edmund Blunden

O rosy red, O torrent spendour

Staining all the Orient gloom,

O celestial work of wonder-

A million mornings in one bloom!

What, does the artist of creation

Try, some new plethora of flame,

For his eye’s fresh fascination?

Has the old cosmic fire grown tame?

In what subnatural strange awaking

Is this body, which seems mine?

These feet towards that blood-burst making,

These ears which thunder, these hands which twine

On grotesque iron? Icy-clear

The air of a mortal day shocks sense,

My shaking men pant after me here.

The acid vapours hovering dense,

The fury whizzing in dozens down,

The clattering rafters, clods calcined,

The blood in the flints and the trackway brown -

I see I am clothed and in my right mind;

The dawn but hangs behind the goal,

What is that artist’s joy to me?

Here limps poor Jock with a gash in the poll,

His red blood now is the red I see,

The swooning white of him, and that red!

The bombs in boxes, the craunche of shells,

The second-hand flitting round; ahead!

It’s plain we were born for this, naught else.

**A Working Party** by Siegfried Sassoon

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| THREE hours ago he blundered up the trench, |  |
| Sliding and poising, groping with his boots; |  |
| Sometimes he tripped and lurched against the walls |  |
| With hands that pawed the sodden bags of chalk. |  |
| He couldn’t see the man who walked in front; | *5* |
| Only he heard the drum and rattle of feet |  |
| Stepping along barred trench boards, often splashing |  |
| Wretchedly where the sludge was ankle-deep. |  |
|  |  |
| Voices would grunt ‘Keep to your right—make way!’ |  |
| When squeezing past some men from the front-line: | *10* |
| White faces peered, puffing a point of red; |  |
| Candles and braziers glinted through the chinks |  |
| And curtain-flaps of dug-outs; then the gloom |  |
| Swallowed his sense of sight; he stooped and swore |  |
| Because a sagging wire had caught his neck. | *15* |
|  |  |
| A flare went up; the shining whiteness spread |  |
| And flickered upward, showing nimble rats |  |
| And mounds of glimmering sand-bags, bleached with rain; |  |
| Then the slow silver moment died in dark. |  |
| The wind came posting by with chilly gusts | *20* |
| And buffeting at corners, piping thin. |  |
| And dreary through the crannies; rifle-shots |  |
| Would split and crack and sing along the night, |  |
| And shells came calmly through the drizzling air |  |
| To burst with hollow bang below the hill. | *25* |
|  |  |
| Three hours ago he stumbled up the trench; |  |
| Now he will never walk that road again: |  |
| He must be carried back, a jolting lump |  |
| Beyond all need of tenderness and care. |  |
|  |  |
| He was a young man with a meagre wife | *30* |
| And two small children in a Midland town; |  |
| He showed their photographs to all his mates, |  |
| And they considered him a decent chap |  |
| Who did his work and hadn’t much to say, |  |
| And always laughed at other people’s jokes | *35* |
| Because he hadn’t any of his own. |  |
|  |  |
| That night when he was busy at his job |  |
| Of piling bags along the parapet, |  |
| He thought how slow time went, stamping his feet |  |
| And blowing on his fingers, pinched with cold. | *40* |
| He thought of getting back by half-past twelve, |  |
| And tot of rum to send him warm to sleep |  |
| In draughty dug-out frowsty with the fumes |  |
| Of coke, and full of snoring weary men. |  |
|  |  |
| He pushed another bag along the top, | *45* |
| Craning his body outward; then a flare |  |
| Gave one white glimpse of No Man’s Land and wire; |  |
| And as he dropped his head the instant split |  |
| His startled life with lead, and all went out. |  |

**Insensibility** by Wilfred Owen

                                 I

Happy are men who yet before they are killed

Can let their veins run cold.

Whom no compassion fleers

Or makes their feet

Sore on the alleys cobbled with their brothers.

The front line withers.

But they are troops who fade, not flowers,

For poets’ tearful fooling:

Men, gaps for filling:

Losses, who might have fought

Longer; but no one bothers.

                                     II

And some cease feeling

Even themselves or for themselves.

Dullness best solves

The tease and doubt of shelling,

And Chance’s strange arithmetic

Comes simpler than the reckoning of their shilling.

They keep no check on armies’ decimation.

                                     III

Happy are these who lose imagination:

They have enough to carry with ammunition.

Their spirit drags no pack.

Their old wounds, save with cold, can not more ache.

Having seen all things red,

Their eyes are rid

Of the hurt of the colour of blood for ever.

And terror’s first constriction over,

Their hearts remain small-drawn.

Their senses in some scorching cautery of battle

Now long since ironed,

Can laugh among the dying, unconcerned.

                                     IV

Happy the soldier home, with not a notion

How somewhere, every dawn, some men attack,

And many sighs are drained.

Happy the lad whose mind was never trained:

His days are worth forgetting more than not.

He sings along the march

Which we march taciturn, because of dusk,

The long, forlorn, relentless trend

From larger day to huger night.

                                     V

We wise, who with a thought besmirch

Blood over all our soul,

How should we see our task

But through his blunt and lashless eyes?

Alive, he is not vital overmuch;

Dying, not mortal overmuch;

Nor sad, nor proud,

Nor curious at all.

He cannot tell

Old men’s placidity from his.

                                     VI

But cursed are dullards whom no cannon stuns,

That they should be as stones.

Wretched are they, and mean

With paucity that never was simplicity.

By choice they made themselves immune

To pity and whatever moans in man

Before the last sea and the hapless stars;

Whatever mourns when many leave these shores;

Whatever shares

The eternal reciprocity of tears

[Base Details](https://allpoetry.com/Base-Details) by Siegfried Sassoon

If I were fierce, and bald, and short of breath   
I'd live with scarlet Majors at the Base,   
And speed glum heroes up the line to death.   
You'd see me with my puffy petulant face,   
Guzzling and gulping in the best hotel,   
Reading the Roll of Honour. "Poor young chap,"   
I'd say — "I used to know his father well;   
Yes, we've lost heavily in this last scrap."  
And when the war is done and youth stone dead,   
I'd toddle safely home and die — in bed.