

Dulce et Decorum Est

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

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

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

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

Wilfred Owen