

**THE CITY OF FEAR,
AND OTHER POEMS**

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The city of fear, and other poems by Gilbert Frankau

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GILBERT FRANKAU

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AND OTHER POEMS**

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OF FEAR
AND OTHER POEMS
By GILBERT FRANKAU

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NOTE

This volume contains a complete collection of Gilbert Frankan's war-poetry published up to the end of 1917. A further volume entitled the "Judgement of Valhalla" was published in March, 1918.

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The City of Fear.

YPRES

January, 1916

B

THE CITY OF FEAR

THIS was a city once ; women lived here ;
Their voices were low to their lovers, o' nights by the murmuring waters ;
Their hands were busied with home—mothers and daughters,
Sisters and wives ;
Now, the shell dives
To scatter anew the shattered remains of the homes that their hands made
 dear ;
Fear
Walks naked at noonday's clear
Where the shopman proffered his wares to the loitering street,
Where the Mass was read,
Above,
The war-birds beat
And whistle : and love
And laughter and work and the hum of the city are utterly dead.

Never a barge
Ruffles the long canals : the lock-gates rot,
Letting thin runnels spout :
Never the plash of a rope in the reeds nor the pash of a hoof on the marge
Crack of whip, nor the shout
Of driver gladdens the quiet : the foul weeds knot,
Strangling the sluggish flow of the waterway ;
Slime of decay
Clots on the banks where the shell-holes cut deep and the shored edges
 crumble,
Clots on the piers of the bridges that echo to transport wheels' rumble
At fall of the night
When no light
Is a-gleam—
Till the sudden flame from a gun-muzzle crimsons the ebon glass of the stream.

Here, where the rails
Ran straight and glittering, linking city to teeming prosperous plain,
Mist and the rain
And long disuse have rusted the glint of the steel that the wheels made
 shining ;
Flame and steel have twisted the steel from the lines of its fair designing :
Gold with grain,
Shone the fields once when the harvest of peacetime was ripe to the sun for
 the flails ;

Green and red,
Gleamed the lights once when the track was a-quiver, a-roar with the
freight and the mails—
But the life of the farm and the life of the field and the traffic of peacetime
are utterly dead.

The brown roads run
Bare to the sun ;
Not a cart
Jingles in through the gates that our torn graves guard
To the mart ;
Never a peasant girl passes and smiles with raised eyes for a greeting,
Never men clink at the cottage the cup of the wayfarers' meeting ;
(Strown
Into heaps by the roadside the cottages, blown
And riven by shell-fire, and scarred !)
Only at night, when the dank mists arise and the gaze of our watchers is
hidden,
Comes tramp and muttered cursing of infantry, rush of horse ridden
In fear of the dark—
For who knows how the far shell may swerve or the blind bullet hiss to its
mark !

Roadway, water or rail, the life has died in the veins,
As life is dead at the breast ;
Only remains
The hollow corpse of a city, slashed and gutted of war,