

DESTROYERS, AND OTHER VERSES

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649762644

Destroyers, and other verses by Sir Henry Head

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

SIR HENRY HEAD

**DESTROYERS, AND
OTHER VERSES**

DESTROYERS
AND OTHER
VERSES

BY
HENRY HEAD, M.D., F.R.S.

HUMPHREY MILFORD

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

London · Edinburgh · Glasgow · New York
Toronto · Melbourne · Cape Town · Bombay

1919

To Her

without whose touch the
strings would have been
mute

1914 TO 1918

1914 TO 1918

I CANNOT STAND AND WAIT.

How can I serve who am too old to fight?
I cannot stand and wait
With folded hands, and lay me down at
 night
In restless expectation that the day
Will bring some stroke of Fate
I cannot help to stay.
Once, like the spider in his patterned web,
Based on immutable law,
Boldly I spun the strands of arduous
 thought,
Now seeming naught,
Rent in the sudden hurricane of war.

Within my corner I will take my place,
And grant me grace
Some delicate thing to perfect and complete
With passionate contentment, as of old
Before my heart grew cold.
This in the Temple I will dedicate,
A widow's mite,
Among more precious gifts, obscured from
 sight
By the majestic panoply of state.
But when triumphal candles have burned
 low
And valorous trophies crumbled into dust,
Perchance my gift may glow,
Still radiating sacrificial joy
Amid the ravages of moth and dust.

1914 TO 1918

HOMING WINGS.

Poised like the black-winged swallow born
to roam
And find a living in the ambient air,
We sacrificed our home
For unpolluted realms of natural law.
Must we despair
Because the neutral tissue of our dreams
Dissolves like ravelled mist before the heat,
And at our feet
The radiant prospect of this ancient land,
Grey hamlets, happy fields, sequestered
streams,
Unconquerable stand?
E'en the world-wandering bird suspends
her nest
Beneath the overhanging cottage eaves
In fecund rest;
And breezes ocean-born
In brooding oaks scarce stir the crumpled
leaves,
Where poppies flame among the ripening
corn.
So we return to worship homely things,
That filled our baby hands, ancestral springs
Resurgent and intense
Stirring the reverent heart
Of childhood's innocence.

1914 TO 1918

PARIS. APRIL, 1916.

"Ils vantaient notre esprit, jamais notre endurance."

How silent are the streets of this grave
town;
Discordant vanity is swept away,
And mourners everywhere pass up and
down,
Sombring the radiance of an April day.
Here all men wear the inward, brooding
look
Of a young mother, when her time is near,
Devoid of fear.
She knows the agony of hope still-born,
And, once before, her body racked and torn
Was at the last denied its victory.

How can we understand,
Whose land inviolate was clogged with
dreams?
They with a single purpose are imbued,
That like a mighty river onward streams
In multitudinous channels ruthlessly,
Past tangled isles and barriers of sand,
Until its irresistible waters roll
To their triumphal goal,
With all-embracing, silent fortitude.