

**SOLDIER POETS :
SONGS OF THE
FIGHTING MEN**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649758876

Soldier poets : songs of the fighting men by Galloway Kyle

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

GALLOWAY KYLE

**SOLDIER POETS :
SONGS OF THE
FIGHTING MEN**

SOLDIER POETS

SONGS OF THE FIGHTING MEN

LONDON
ERSKINE MACDONALD
MCMXVI

Preface

THIS volume has grown out of a suggestion made by a firm of booksellers who were inspired by a letter in *The Times* in April last, headed "Soldier Poets," which directed attention to the fine spirit animating the poems by Corporal Streets, whose sonnet "Gallipoli" had appeared a few days previously. Slowly and without effort the scheme of the volume has matured and several distinct features have evolved.

Although this representative collection is not an anthology—it consists of work hitherto unpublished in volume form of a number of "soldier poets" brought together within one cover—the contents have assumed a certain homogeneity. They define, record and illustrate the aspirations, emotions, impressions and experiences of men of all ranks and branches of the Army, and they reveal a unity of spirit, of exultant sincerity and unconquerable idealism that makes the reader very proud and very humble. And if some of them deal with home themes by way of solace amid the horrors of war, the poems are essentially war poems, revealing the soul of the soldier going into battle, describing

Preface

incidental scenes, focusing the feelings, both individual and general, of a unique body of fighting men. For one may claim that this volume represents the soldier as poet rather than the poet as soldier. It is typical of that intensification of feeling and concentration of expression developed by military service in the defence of country under extraordinary conditions which have yielded a surprising volume of fine poetry. "I know of no one to compare him to but the Archangel Michael" was said of the poet-paladin Roland. The noble Achilles of the West has to-day many brave peers who face battle with a song, Michaels and Rolands of civilization.

Any objection that, since practically all men of active age have been drawn into the Army willy-nilly, the term "soldier poet" is ambiguous, has already been met. Even a cursory glance at this volume will show that the authors are soldiers whose military service dates back in most cases to the early days of the war, if not earlier, and not conscript poetasters who have found a new stimulant to jaded literary exercises. The note of pessimism and decadence is absent, together with the flamboyant and hectic, the morose and the mawkish. The soldier poets leave the maudlin and the mock-heroic, the gruesome and fearful

Preface

handling of Death and his allies to the neurotic civilian who stayed behind to gloat on imagined horrors and inconveniences and anticipate the uncomfortable demise of friends.

What seem to me to be the characteristics of this volume give it more than a literary and temporary value. When the history of these tremendous times comes to be written, the poetry of the period will be found to be an illuminating index and memorial. And the historian will be least able to neglect the poetry of the camp and the battlefield, which reflects the temper and experiences of our great citizen army. The spirit that has turned our soldiers into poets is the spirit of the V.C.—brave and debonair, but neither melancholy nor mad. It is not a new spirit, but a new bright efflorescence—a survival and a revival. “The half-men, with their dirty songs and dreary” were stricken dumb by the storm—at the most, they whimpered in safety with none to heed them: the braver spirits were shocked into poetry and like the larks are heard between the roaring of the guns—the articulate voices of millions of fighting men, giving to poetry a new value and significance.

For many months this new verse—vivid, definite, concentrated, and not a mechanical echo any more than a striving after new or bizarre effects—has

Preface

flowed in from all parts of our far-flung battle-line. Scores of slim volumes and hundreds of separate poems have come from men in the Army—from France and Flanders, Gallipoli and the Soudan, Egypt and East Africa. The published volumes have not been laid under contribution, but some of the poems collected here have appeared in *The Poetry Review*, in which a greatly appreciated feature has been made of contributions by soldiers, while we are indebted to *The New Witness* for permission to include typical poems by Lieutenant Geoffrey Howard and the late Lieutenant W. N. Hodgson,¹ M.C., who left Oxford to join the Army and found a grave in France in July last. About the same time Lieutenant Victor Ratcliffe¹ was killed in action near Fricourt, and as this volume is going through the press we hear that Sergeant Streets,¹ who was a miner before he enlisted in August, 1914, and Corporal Robertson have been "missing" since July 1. This is their priceless legacy. No further introduction or commentary is needed.

GALLOWAY KYLE.

"THE POETRY REVIEW" OFFICE,
September, 1916.

¹ Memorial volumes are in preparation for early publication.

Contents

H. D'A. B., Major, 55th Division (B.E.F., France)—		PAGE
Marthe		15
The March		15
Givenchy Field		16
No-Man's-Land		17
The Counter-attack		18
JOSEPH COURTNEY, Lieut., R.A.M.C.—		
“As the Leaves Fall”		19
S. DONALD COX, Rifleman, 2/5 C.L.R., London Rifle Brigade—		
To My Mother—1916		22
The Song of The Happy Warrior		22
E. J. L. GARSTIN, Lieut., 12th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment—		
To the Rats		24
Lines written between 1 and 2:30 a.m. in a German dug-out		25
JULIAN GRENFELL, D.S.O., Captain, Royal Dra- goons—		
Into Battle		27
To a Black Greyhound		29
The Hills		30
Hymn to the Fighting Boar		32
To the Mussourie Race Club		34

Contents

	PAGE
WILFRID J. HALLIDAY, Private, 13th Battalion, West Yorks. Regiment—	
The Grave	36
The Awakening	37
The Red Cross	38
The Gleam	39
To-day	39
G. ROUNTREE HARVEY, 2/A.M., Royal Flying Corps—	
The Maid of France	41
Mother of Sons	42
GEOFFREY HOWARD, Lieut., Royal Fusiliers—	
The Beach Road by the Wood	43
"Without Shedding of Blood"	45
England	46
MALCOLM HUMPHREY, Lance-Corporal, A.O.C.—	
Hills of Home	48
DYNELEY HUSSEY, Lieut., 13th Battalion, Lanca- shire Fusiliers—	
Youth	50
Security	51
Courage	52
The Dead	52
Joy	53
Mirage	54
E. HARDRESS LLOYD, Lieut., London Irish Rifles	
	55
JOHN LODGE, Lieut., 8th Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment—	
God and the Child	56
On Zeppelin Picquet	57
To Our Child Unborn	58