

TEA-LEAVES DUST & ASHES

by

HUGO DEWAR

C. LAHR

12 LITTLE NEWPORT STREET, LONDON, W.C.1

1/- *net.*

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For Margarita



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these poems, except "Cage" for which thanks are
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W H E N he is sitting at the desk,
 Who used to ride the skies,
 Does the vision of that boundless world
 Still linger in his eyes ?

When he who wandered a waste of seas
 Walks in a narrow space,
 Does the wind from far horizons
 Still beat upon his face ?

When he is home from overseas,
 From far and alien lands,
 Does she sometimes wonder when the firelight
 Shines red upon his hands ?

T O O long we laboured, too long ;
 That the lords of the land
 Above and below might take all we gave ;
 And deep and bitter the wrong
 That a man's own hand
 Should make a man's own grave.
 It lies on the father, lies on the son
 Like coal-dust under the skin
 That water will not clean.
 We closed our ranks and we won
 What it cost much blood to win—
 The little it is—and the end is still unseen.
 Maybe the city mist-enshrouded
 That seers have sung, whose towers gleam
 Like golden spears aspiring
 To pierce the clouded
 Curtain of our dream
 And our desiring.
 Maybe . . . but this we know :
 We heard the children cry for bread
 Till our stubborn backs were bowed
 Again in the forests lost below,
 Where no green branches spread
 And no bird sings aloud
 To the sun and the blue sky overhead.

WEEDS

LOVELY and lush are the weeds that grow
 on the ruins of London Town.
 We marvel at this green show,
 these wandering wings of down,
 these flowers whose names we do not know—
 City-bred flesh and bone—
 filling the air with seeds that blow
 mid the hostile brick and stone.
 We pause by the wall and look below
 where forgetful grasses hide,
 and remember cities of long ago,
 and ponder their broken pride.
 What shall be built where tall weeds flow,
 a creeping, persistent tide?
 Shall the tempest reap what chance winds sow?
 Shall riot and ruin abide?
 Shall a severed world to one world grow?
 Our lives that are broken be whole?
 Shall we learn the names that we do not know?
 Shall the City discover a soul?

SILENCE

THE rasp of a rat's teeth tearing
 the flesh that parts with a snap;
 the grind of a maggot eating;
 the tears that fall in the lap
 with thunder of boulders bounding
 down Etna's iron face;
 the machinegun rattle announcing
 the seconds' relentless race
 to the minutes crumbling the hours
 as the white seas swallow the shore;
 the mumble of withering flow'rs
 that have bloomed and will bloom no more;
 then a host of high horns howling;
 the stains of the night's black blood;
 and you hear the microbes growling
 as the face sinks down in the mud.
 But the awful sound of silence,
 between the seconds' beat,
 is an army in love with violence,
 is the stomp of steel-shod feet,
 is the loss of the past returning,
 draining the heart of dread—
 the terrible silence yearning
 the voice of a comrade dead.

GARDEN IN GERMANY

AMID the grim remembrances
of grief and terror
she tends her tiny garden :
two bean-rows and some flowers
where no lake-waters lap
and evening is the memory of sorrow.

Here in the shadow of the house-high rubble
is a flag planted,
is the challenge of the ever-fertile soil,
the hearts of simple men.

Leave us one mound of all these stones—
A monument to science and to art,
to statesmanship, philosophy,
and faithless faith.

And we who know that flowers grow
in the grey deserts of the slums,
see here the same soul stir,
and know here too are hands
would make a garden of the world.

THE DUST CART

EACH week the dust-cart comes,
bearing the legend :
Tea-leaves,
Dust and Ashes only.
There is no roll of fun'ral drums.

Come, rest your poor old feet ;
sit down, mother, sit down.
Sit down, my work-worn world,
the tea is made.
Forget the dust-cart on the street.

Each week they take away—
the tea-leaves of disillusion,
dust of our dreams,
and ashes of our hopes.
But still to-morrow is another day.

STILL sometimes when an airplane thunders
 overhead
 The heartbeat quickens in a momentary dread ;
 Then anger follows at the men with facile speech
 Applauding peace, who yet in ev'ry action teach
 The need for bloody war ; in whom there yet
 survives
 The lust for power ; and to whom the small,
 crushed lives
 Of millions is a sad tale, but of other men
 Who live a world away ; and so they turn them then
 To new designs for bombers and to drill the youth
 In ways of war. Seeing the lie beneath the truth
 They will not tell it—and so ever while they speak,
 So while they prate of peace on earth with tongue in
 cheek,
 We hear the answer of the airplane overhead,
 And know for ev'ry lying word a child is dead.

A PANTHER pacing to and fro
 Within a cage—without a pause he paced
 His blunt voracious head hung low
 And never greater beauty graced
 So mean a place ; and to and fro
 And to and fro unheeding of the idle show
 The chattering crowd, the foolish-faced
 Regarders of a fallen foe,
 His lithe and lunging body swung
 From side to side and to and fro.

And here and there among
 The crowd that watched his woe
 Some serious-faced that found no tongue,
 Whose eyes but followed him—and lo !
 'Twas Time and Fate that they saw go
 Back and Forth and to and fro ;
 And back and forth was forth and back
 Along a single narrow track ;
 And deep within the heart the rage
 And dim within the eyes the fire
 Within the cruel iron cage
 Confined the vast unvoicable desire.

And never room in which to range
 And never choice and never change
 And ever alien things and strange,
 Where, bestial and yet sublime,
 We expiate an unknown crime
 Within eternity of time
 Within eternity of time.

FOOTSLOGGER'S LAMENT

THERE i'n't no beer, there i'n't no fags, the
girls don' seem the same ;
an a'ter all we seen an' done, this life is blanky tame ;
in all the dirt an' all the muck of all the lousy war
seemed somethin' that we i'n't got now an' never had
before.

There's blokes bin sittin on their arse when we was
up the line,
when we was lying in the mud them beggars had it
fine ;

I got no time for muckers who wear ribbons they
i'n't earned—

see—five of us was lying' there an' only two returned.
The ATS was typin' out the wounded an' the dead
an' nine in ten di'nt have no thought for what them
figures said :

they mostly thought of dollin' up and goin' to a show
with NCO's and officers—us privates was too low.
I got no time for all that stuff, that journalistic muck
what told us Jerry weren't no good but just had all
the luck :

we met him an' we fought him, an' we know what's
wrong an' right,

an' no-one's tellin' me them bastards couldn't fight.
I seen the bodies rottin' there—yeh, an' I've smelt
'em too—

I seen the letters what they saved—an' photos—an'
I knew
the wife was tellin' of the kids, of leave, an'—don'
get hurt ;
don' make me laugh—an' there he was, alyin' in the
dirt.
We've had it chum, we've had it—they got no time
for us ;
we i'n't no heroes now no more—they won' make
no more fuss.

THE INSTITUTION

THEY have seen the desires of their years
Devoured by the locust teeth ;
Not lost to laughter, nor past all tears,
They sit now on the bench beneath
The cool canopy of summer leaves ;
By the mottled trunks of the trees
They sit and watch where the traffic weaves.
Women who worked and wanted, these
Now on the bench by the graywhite stones
Of the graveyard, calm and green ;
Where the roots reach greedy under the bones ;
These seek to remember what has been.
With the graves around to remind ;
And the traffic that never stays,
Of a world neither cruel nor kind ;
Here, being poor, they end their days.

NINE DEAD MEN

NINE men dead and their homes gone bare ;
And wives are weeping, are weeping there.
Nine men dig in the earth no more ;
And mothers weep for the sons they bore.
Nine men dead in the dark and dust :
And women forget because they must.
Nine men dead and the cry goes forth :
Now many tons of coal were they worth ?
O draw me a graph and show me his soul,
Who measures sorrow in tons of coal.

THEY ARE LED CAPTIVE INTO MANY LANDS

WHAT words do we hear of wisdom
From those who plot our fate ?
Is there hope for a hopeless people ?
Is there life for those who wait ?
We have come through the dark to the dawning,
But the light is bleak and grey,
And we know that we have not conquered,
Nor found the only way.

They have taken and bound them captive ;
They are led into many lands ;
And the hearts of the weary women
Are emptier than their hands.
They have battered and burned and broken ;
They have cast them onto the roads ;
And the men who toil they have burdened
With heavier loads.

And the head is hewn from the body
And kicked round the city walls,
By the law that sanctions vengeance
When the fortress falls.
They sow us teeth of the dragon ;
They trim the truth to lies ;
And they will not hear the whimper
Of the starving child that dies.

For there's none to comfort the lowly
In the councils of the great,
Where they chaffer for wealth and power
In the name of the people's state.
O the men with tongues are cunning,
And the men with strength are meek :
They will add but sorrow to sorrow
So long as you let them speak.

Rouse ! For the sands are running !
Speak ! Let the gage be hurled—
For the heart of a heartless people,
And the soul of a soulless world !