

POETRY

Ares: A Poem

Books VI and VII

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BOOK VI. Ares Contestant

I have a gray-eyed sister, only half.
Our common father is the great god Zeus,
But I was born of Hera, Queen of Gods,
And my half-sister's dam Metis, a nymph
Of utmost wisdom and judiciousness.

Athena is her name, and she is called
The God of War, the same as I am called,
But we are not the same, and I protest.
To war I fly and eagerly engage,
While she is more particular and coy.

It's clear that she does not enjoy the fight
And only battles those she judges wrong.
Call her not the God of War but say
She is the God of Compromise and Calm
The Goddess of the City, not the field.

Athena is a spiteful jealous god,
Whose bright eyes changed to deepest forest green
When she discovered that Poseidon had
In lustful passion raped the innocent
Medusa, her devoted worshiper.

She turned the innocent Medusa from
A girl of sweetness and of loveliness
Into a monstrous piece of villainy,
With sisters Euryale and Stheno for
An uncle's crime, incestuous assault.

Speak not to me of Pallas glorious
When in her fit of jealousy condemned
A victim of an act of wickedness
By one who is a member of the clan
Because he's stronger than the rest of us.

Athena is no warrior to me,
But just makes up in her regalia
To battle with a stalwart worthy foe
While using mortal men to do the fight
With clever ruses as her surrogates.

It's true that I deliver death and dread
To enemies across the land and sea,
But never say to me, you hypocrite,
For I fight gods when they are in the wrong,
And do not yield though I may suffer harm.

The people worship her with monuments,
But where are those who worship me, I ask.
Where are the temples and the monuments?
Ungrateful men whose argument I take,
Whose enemies I butcher in their name?

There is no adversary I cannot
Defeat in battle with my axe and sword.
No wiles do I employ to trick the foe,
Deceiving him to think I'm on his side,
Dumbfounding him with subtle trickery.

My sister's strategy is feminine
And hidden from the battle's ugliness,
Imagining a pristine lea of green,
Of Nature's calm and tranquil loveliness,
A lie that young men soon will know too well.

The battlefield is not a rustic scene
Of cattle grazing on the meadowland.
Condemned are those who sing the songs of praise
For wars in which they never fought and bled
And ignorant of war's reality.

She may be called by some a God of War
But not by me. Her symbol is an owl,
A bird that flies at night and catches mice!
I would with one clean swipe dispatch the head
Of that offensive animal of hers.

I have no equal as the God of War,
As one who bears the scars of battles past,
Who joins the combat on whatever side
Appears to win elusive victory,
Aggressive in the violence of war.

If shedding blood and breaking bones in war
Seems harsh to someone's sensitivities,
They should not blame the God of War but look
Into the mirror at themselves to see
Who starts the war in lust for more and more.

If there's no doubt that wars are horrible,
Then why do men insist on starting them?
Until there is an answer, I am here
To spill the blood and break the bones of men
Who call on me and pray for victory.

I fought against the bravest enemies,
Among them Persians, Mongols, and Chinese.
Sometimes they win, but often I prevail,
But in the hard-won conquest or defeat,
I treat my adversary with respect.

The feeling is not something new to me.
Pain is not foreign to the God of War,
Nor is compassion alien to me.
The warrior can feel the suffering
Of those who lose and also those who love.

When Priam came into Achilles' tent,
He took the greatest risk a king could do,
Evading the Myrmidon sentinels
On guard around the well-armed camp at night,
To seek a pardon from Peleus' son.

Achilles had in sacrilege defiled
The corpse of Hector, Prince of Troy, now slain
In payment for the death of Patroclus,
But Greece's greatest warrior took heed
And showed compassion to the father's plea.

Do not suppose that we who fight your wars
Have never felt the pain of grievous loss,
For friends have died, and those of us who live
Long mourn in lamentation, singing praise
Of those brave men who perished by our side.

Before the battle, thoughtful men at war
Recall the joy of family and friends
Predicting how the conflict will resolve
Not knowing if those joys will ever be
Again, if they will live or die today.

So throw the dice and tally up the count.
If we prevail, we'll celebrate the win,
But something in the victor's heart endures,
Insisting that he contemplate the price
His adversary and his loves have paid.

While I am willing to contest in war,
I take no joy in pain that I inflict
On men I conquer, for I know full well
That one day, I will meet a conqueror
And must prepare to overcome the pain.

Delusional the man who thought himself
The reincarnate Emperor of Rome,
Benito Mussolini was his name
But he preferred Il Duce to be used. 1922-1945
"The Leader" had a more majestic sound.

Il Duce thought of Hannibal, the foe
Of ancient Rome, who crossed the daunting Alps, 218 BCE
But lost the Second Punic War to Rome, 201 BCE
And back to Carthage, back to Africa
The brave heroic Hannibal returned.

I've no regret for my opposing Rome,
For fighting on the Punic hero's side.
There is no faithlessness or treachery,
Though that's the name the haughty Romans used,
To hold the men of Carthage in contempt.

What was Il Duce's plan in Africa?
To gain the glory of the victory
Of ancient Rome, but once again I fight
For Africa, and now I find myself
In celebration of defeating Rome.

Atahualpa never saw the ruse
Pizarro had devised to massacre
In Cajamarca the entirety
Of proud Peruvians with treachery,
And claiming Incan land for God and Spain.

1532

The crime of treason is a two-edged sword,
As one man's traitor is for someone else
A patriotic fighter for a cause
That holds the promise for a victory
Through sabotage and other means of war.

The question that I ask at such a time
Is of the motivation of the man
And of the valid justice of his cause.
Did he commit his act for goodness' sake
Or out of greediness or self-regard?

When Rome controlled the land of Solomon,
A priest of Yahweh spoke of love for all,
Advancing the idea that he was
Incarnate son of that divinity.

Judas Iscariot betrayed the man
To Roman soldiers in Jerusalem
For just a bag of thirty silver coins
But found he could not live with what he'd done
And hanged himself and gave his name to shame.

You mortals seem to have a tendency
To relegate to places of the mind
Where darkness can conceal the flaws and faults
That led your nation to defeat in war
When better judgment might have won the day.

Your history is filled with falsity
With unearned glory when your side has won,
But nowhere to be found in those accounts
Are the confessions of mistakes that led
To cataclysmic failure of the state.

Miscalculation I can understand
For what the future holds you cannot know,
And you must estimate as best you can
The probabilities of each outcome.
Sometimes your guess is wrong and you must pay.



The Central Highlands of Pleiku was lush, 1965
With leafy trees above the forest floor,
Until the Agent Orange herbicide 1965-1971
Denuded hilltops for the firebase
Eliminating all the hiding points.

The Ashau Valley was that meadowland,
Where farmers grew their rice a thousand years,
But then the bombers came and did their best
To turn the farms into a field of cratered pits 1965-1973
Where rice will not be seen for many years.

What is it, I can never understand,
That causes followers of evil men
To put aside their careful reasoning
Allowing criminals to have their way,
That any sentient being would deny?

Just look at all the blunders Hitler made:
Invading Poland nineteen thirty-nine, 1939
Barbarossa then in forty-one,
Declaring war on the United States
In that same year, followed by Stalingrad. 1942-1943

When Wilhelm Keitel said of that sick man,
He is “the greatest warlord of all time,”
Who but the Nazi general in charge
Could get away with such a blatant lie,
A sycophantic unctuous groveling?

I wonder what he thought in Nürnberg, 1945-1946
A hangman’s knotted noose around his neck.
Did he still think that Hitler was so great,
Or did he lastly come to realize
That he was just the world’s greatest fraud?

Who is my enemy? I need to know
His name and place where he was born and trained,
But more than this, I need to know the cause
Compelling him to fight. Why is he here?
How many of my blows will he withstand?

How strong is his commitment to the cause
That brings him to the battlefield this day,
And who is he, the one who pays his wage,
For his own profit or a cause that's just?
I need to know if I'm to join the fight.

If I'm not clear, I'll set the record straight:
My sword, my iron axe, my javelin
Will not be prostituted by those men
Who lie and cheat and steal the tender lives
Of naïve boys who trust authorities.

I'll fight the fight with great intensity
Beside the gallant knight whom I respect
But never on the side of profiteers
Whose pleonexia corrupts the crowd
With wicked jingoistic platitudes.

The coward lies. The coward cheats and steals
Whatever he may see that has no guard
Protecting it from thieving hands that grab
Behind the backs of those with naïve trust,
Assuming honesty where it is not.

Dishonesty is to the warrior
A flaw of someone's damaged character
That could prove fatal on the battlefield
Where trust is soldier's valued currency
And there can be no tolerance for doubt.

Duplicity is tantamount to death,
With mighty lethal weapons brought to bear,
Where training proves its value in the fight
And there is no such thing as small mistakes
When lives depend on honesty and trust.

The Spartans train to fight from early age
When little hands can hardly grip the axe
And cannot wrap around the broadsword's hilt.
While axe and sharpened sword are just the tools,
They learn that victory is in the heart.



Olympic games encourage healthful sport
Among the youth who train to do their best,
To use the talents and the skills they have
In quest of glory and of victory,
Conforming to the rules of sportsmanship.

When athletes take the field, they understand
That some will win and some will come behind,
Competing for the garlands and the fame,
The feeling one has risen to the test,
Complying with the rules of sportsmanship.

But war is not like that. There are no rules
Of sportsmanship. There are no referees
Ensuring conduct that is just and fair,
Negating the decree that might is right—
But there's another trail that has been blazed.

I can stand before a court and swear
That I have never murdered innocents
Nor tortured anyone at any time.
Let all of those be held accountable
Whoever start or prosecute a war.

Send forth no untrained boys to fight with me,
Conscripted only yesterday from towns
And villages, who know not where they are,
No training in the weapons they obtained,
Or even why they're there in foreign fields.

It isn't in my nature to confront
A teenage boy you send to take your place
When in your fright and arrant cowardice
You will not dare to meet me face-to-face,
So I just put the boy to restful sleep.

If you will not come out from where you hide,
Then send me your best men, your warriors,
And I will gladly meet them in fair fight—
Or maybe I should find where you are hid
So I can throw you up against the wall.

What is it makes you think that you can hide
Forever from the justice you deserve?
On golden scales of Themis you'll be judged,
And on that day I'll watch as you are cast
Into perdition in a fiery Hell.

What can we call those men who kill for sport,
For entertainment hunt and kill the fox,
The hare, the deer, the pheasant on the wing?
Perverse employment of the energy
That could be used to build and not destroy.

Those are the men who go to war with joy,
The opportunity to kill again,
This time a fellow human on the run,
But now the hunted is a hunter, too,
And who's the one who's being entertained?

I would not fight with those who kill for sport,
To be allied with anyone who thinks
That purposed death of any living thing
Is but a way to satisfy the urge
To demonstrate one's pretend manliness.

The God of War does not pretend to be
A devotee of war for its own sake.
When I have killed a rival warrior,
I take no joy in that most grave event,
No hollow entertainment do I feel.

Who wrote the laws, the rules for humankind,
That Moses claimed came from the mountaintop,
From Yahweh, jealous god of Abraham,
Demanding sycophantic flattery
From deferential Hebrew refugees?

The Greeks, the Romans, and the Indians
All had their gods exacting sacrifice,
Reflecting human eccentricities,
The quirks and foibles recognizable
Among their kin and neighbors and themselves.



Who wrote the laws prescribing what to eat,
Proscribing other foods on pain of death,
And how to dress, what fabric and what hues,
What this god will accept, what others won't,
Lest mortals may offend their deity?

It's clear to me you humans wrote the laws,
Not to protect the claims of some divine,
But to control, to reign, to dominate
The naïve masses who can be deceived
By promises of frauds and charlatans.

From those pretenders and their promises
Come empires and their military schemes
Exhorting young men to participate
In some adventure in exotic lands
Designed to satisfy the lust for wealth.

But what the people do not understand
Is that lust can never be appeased,
That greed's a fire that cannot be put out,
As ravenous a monster as exists
In all the universe of gods and men.

You truly err if you believe you can,
By careful thought and prudent reasoning,
Come to a compromise preventing war,
For greed and hate are not amenable
To rationality in any form.

When Hitler wrote the laws for Germany,
He acted out of hate for Jews and Slavs,
Without a shred of rationality,
Or willingness to reach a compromise,
Unleashing darkest evil from its bounds.



BOOK VII. Ares Vanquished

One grain of sand falls through the hourglass,
One moment that can never be retrieved,
That represents an opportunity
To strike a blow or help a friend in need,
A moment to decide what I shall be.

The choice is mine. The choice is yours, as well.
Shall we support the pious challenger
Who has a valid claim to promised land
Or shall we stand with those who've held the ground
For countless years before the fight began?

Poseidon will support the side that's just,
The mortal or the god whose virtue shines
Above the rest. He built the walls of Troy,
And he expected Trojan loyalty,
But when there was no gratitude, he left.

My Uncle sets a valued precedent,
And I regret I was compelled to change
Allegiance from Olympia to Troy,
A choice that nearly cost immortal life,
But one I felt I had to make for love

In awe, I think about my place in tales
Of gallant heroes from the start of time
And vow that all the honors brought to me
Be true, with no embellishment endowed,
No flattery to gild the manuscript.

I know full well the disrespect and scorn
Of other gods and mortal men to me,
Intended to belittle me, but I
Will not abandon my eternal quest
To demonstrate to all my battle skills.

Olympus is my home, where I was born,
But here is where I show what I can do,
This place where men are constantly at war,
Where I can always find a battlefield,
On any continent, on land or sea.

My memory is full to overflow
With brutal deadly wars both short and long,
But there is one I wish I could forget,
Recalling greater pain I've ever felt,
Across the sea in ancient Ilium.

The cow-eyed Hera, mother of disgust,
With that God of Compromise and Calm,
Lazed with the God of Beauty and of Love,
In the Belus garden trading gossip,
As Thetis and Peleus pledged their vows.

Great Zeus invited all the gods but one
To celebrate the marriage of the king
Of Phthia, Peleus, a mortal man,
To his beloved Thetis, ocean nymph,
At his Olympus palace in the sky.

Eris was excluded from the list,
For fear that she would disconcert the guests.
She sneaked around the edge and tossed a gift
Among the three, an apple made of gold:
"For the fairest" written on the fruit.

Who would decide? Not Zeus! That god's too smart.
Lo! There's a shepherd boy. Let him decide.
Hera would make him Asia, Europe's King.
Athena wisdom and success in war.
Aphrodite the most comely girl.

"I need not power nor to be a king.
I'm not a soldier, so I will not fight.
I choose the God of Love to win the prize
Aphrodite, give to me the girl."
What kind of boy would make another choice?

That girl is Helen and a married queen,
Unhappy wife of Sparta's brutal King.
The boy is Paris, Prince of Ilium.
The two set sail for love and started war.
Enamored of the God of Love, I join.

Her beauty is her curse and that of Troy,
Ten years of war and thousands dead, the Greeks,
The Trojans, kings and princes, warriors
And those who hold no brief for either side,
But I must choose and take my sword to war.

But wait! There is no wind to fill the sails.
A thousand ships lie still nearby the shore.
It's Artemis who holds the breeze at bay
"Agamemnon!" she called out in wrath,
"You owe a debt to me," the Huntress said.

"You hunted in the orchard that you knew
Was my most sacred place that's banned to men.
My precious stag you slew, and then you bragged
That you had bested me in archery.
Your arrogance and pride demand a price."

"A hundred thousand soldiers here await
The wind to blow the ships away to Troy,
So name your price and I will gladly pay."
Artemis then weighed the chieftain's sin
To find just punishment for the offense.

"Iphigenia is your dearest child.
Your sacrifice of her to me will do."
Agamemnon staggered at the thought.
"What cruelty is in this goddess' heart?
You cannot have this innocent," he said.

"Then stay at Aulis, son of Atreus,
While offshore embarked soldiers restless grow.
Deprived of my attendant stag, I claim
Equivalence from you and from your house.
No more, no less is what I claim from you."

Menelaus, uncle to the girl,
The sacrificial Spartan maid, implored
His brother to accede to the demand:
“There is no other way. The die is cast.
The cause is right. The price is justified.”

“Iphigenia, come to me,” he wrote.
“Achilles wishes you to be his bride.”
The message was a lie, but she’ll not know.
With Clytemnestra at the head, she came
To wed the great Peleus’ son—she thought.

The music playing was no wedding song,
Evoking gladness, joy, and happiness.
It was a hymn in praise to Artemis.
“Betrayed!” The mother screamed in agony.
“What villainy is in this evil place!”

“I had no part in this,” Achilles said,
“But I will wed the girl to keep her safe.”
“That will not do,” her father said to him.
“The Goddess of the Hunt requires her death.
It is a sacrifice to free the winds.”

This girl, this brave young girl, then yielded up.
“I know what I must do save my aunt,
To bring her back from Troy to home in Greece.
These men will sacrifice their lives in war,
So I, too, give my life in this great cause.”

I watched this scene and with amusement thought
That war might not take place but for this girl,
Who in her loyalty would give her life
As thousands more in years to come would do,
Denying future battles of it all.

I rarely think of death, at least, not mine;
Though many I have killed, it’s not for me.
I will not go to Tartarus below,
Or cross the River Styx on Charon’s raft—
Stand off, you son of Erebus and Nyx!

If I'm to meet god of the underworld,
It will be here above and not below
In gracious Hades' lair, my uncle's home.
I'm not Persephone. I won't be tricked
And trapped beneath for all eternity.

In Ilium, the battles rage ten years.
Aphrodite, whom I love is here,
Helping as she can the Trojan side,
And I will do the same with axe and sword.
Apollo is with us, Aeneas, too.

Brave son of Aphrodite, prince of Troy,
Aeneas stands with her, the God of Love,
And with his wife Creusa and their son,
Ascanius, a royal Trojan clan,
With little care for purloined Spartan queen.

Aeneas, one of Troy's great warriors,
Was wounded by the Greek Diomedes,
He's carried off by she who gave him birth,
The god of my unquenchable desire,
When Diomedes draws her blood, as well.

For Diomedes, I had great respect,
A warrior who's strong in fights with sword
And combats man-to-man with no relief,
I would with him combine my strength and skill
To win the day against a common foe.

I've known this Argos prince for twenty years
And watched him as he grew in height and weight.
I waited for the day when we would be
A team, a pair of comrades in some war,
In combat closely tethered side-by-side.

To have a comrade by my side, to watch
At times for the occasional surprise,
Is welcome when I trust the warrior,
But then I fight alone when that's required
And my ferocity will win the day.

I trusted Diomedes with my life,
A warrior of honor, so I thought,
Too strict to deviate from chivalry,
Too dedicated to the righteous cause,
To cause dishonor to Argivians.

But I am told that chivalry is dead
Along with loyalty and comity
And all consigned to backroom history,
Abandoned common decency, a war
Is just another filthy charnel house.

And I'm enraged by this Greek's sacrilege
When he drew out Aphrodite's blood.
To wound the God of Love is most profane
That must by all the gods receive rebuke,
And who but I am there to punish him?

With my great sword I reach to strike at him,
The Argive blasphemer, Tydeus' son,
My sword is true; it never fails its mark,
But Argo's king is quick and slips away
Behind a grove of trees and pile of rocks.

I chase the villain through the wooded plain
Attacking with my sharpened axe and sword,
But from his hiding place, he throws a spear.
It would have missed me by a meter wide
But Pallas intervenes and guides his spike.

It tears into my body and my gut.
My scream of pain is heard in all the world.
Is this the end? I thought in my distress
Then vanquished is the greatest God of War?
My hatred for Athena reached its peak.

I'm overcome with sorrow and with grief,
Not just because of pain I've never known.
Vitality is seeping from my frame;
It's hard for me to even stand erect,
And fury fades as does my consciousness.

That I could die had never been my thought,
But now the dismal prospect's here in view,
The possibility that I could die
Was all too frightening to contemplate
As I lay bleeding from my sister's strike.

No! It is not to be. It's not my time.
Deliverance is sure so long as seeds
Of enmity and avarice abound
On earth infecting those who crave
And take away what weaker people have.

A mortal cannot kill a god like me
In battle or by secret stratagem
Although they try, as Diomedes did,
They always fail and never will succeed,
For I am not the stuff of mortals made.

You know by now the essence of a god,
Who manifests in any form he likes,
And swiftly metamorphoses from one
Form to an alternate, a substitute
Appropriate, more fitting to the end.

Two years did Absalom hold his revenge,
But Amnon's rape of Tamar clawed at him,
And if revenge is best a dish served cold,
Then Absalom would soon retaliate
And order brother Amnon's vicious death.

So brother versus brother is the tale
That would precipitate a fratricide
Among the sons of David's royalty,
Some twenty thousand sons of mothers dead,
All those lives lost because of Amnon's lust.

The king, the potentate, dissolved in tears.
"O Absalom, my son, my son!" he cried.
I fought for David's side and for the men
Who loved exceedingly the Psalmist King,
Adored the poet and the warrior.

As roaring bonfires light the summer skies,
A thousand candles turn the night to day,
But bonfires die before the summer ends,
And candles dwindle till the wick is done,
Just as the empires burn and fade away.

The Achaemenians so powerful
Reigned over much of northern Africa,
As well as western Asia in its prime,
And at the Battle of Thermopylae 480 BCE
Defeated Greece and all of its allies.

But that great empire went to its demise
When Alexander on the Issus plain 333 BCE
Led the attack against the infantry
And cavalry of Darius the Third
Confounding Codommanus in a rout.

The Persian Empire started its decline
When Xerxes looted his own treasury
To fight the Greeks away from Persia's home 330 BCE
With men and arms and many costly ships,
And met the brilliant Macedonia.

The Spartans lost their long-held dominance
To Thebes when Epaminondas prevailed
At Leuctra as elite battalions, 371 BCE
Made up of lovers, fought ferociously
And sent to death the proud Laconians.

The empire of the Romans seemed to be
Invincible, impervious, and safe,
But at its edges were barbarians
Who brought the mighty empire to its end,
Its vanity collapsing in defeat.

Arrogance and hate in Germany
Held out the promise of a thousand years
Of German domination of the world
Beneath the Nazi party's swastika,
But just a few years on and it was gone.

Persian, Spartan, Roman, or Teuton,
Their story is the same, the bonfire ends,
A candle flickers and its light goes out.
Each empire's born in war and sure to die
In yet another war to next in line.

I've been at war so long I can't recall
The faces of the warriors I've killed
Or allied comrades who became my friends,
Who at my side fought with such bravery,
Defying fear despite the chance of death.

My pity's not for me. I'll overcome
The agony of pain and of defeat
When I am fighting on the side of right,
In wars that you and I consider just.
My pity's for the widows and their babes.

The soldier's trained and well-equipped to fight,
Defend himself against the enemy,
But that is not the case for all of you,
Who are not ready to engage the fierce
Unscrupulous antagonist alone.

I will be there to fight on your behalf,
But only if your cause is just and fair,
And if you lack the capability
To meet the foe and win the victory,
Then I will come and stand to fight with you.

In Athens, where democracy was born,
There was a man in the Academy
Who thought, like me, that wars will never end,
"Only the dead have seen the end of war,"
The teacher, Plato, taught Athenians.

Much can be said about the human race,
Of capabilities beyond the rat,
But like the rat, the human race will bite
The helping hand extended to assist,
Not thinking of the adverse consequence.

If Plato thought his lessons would be learned,
Assuming sentient rationality,
He held the human mind in high regard,
Without sufficient skeptical regard
For passions that distort the reasoned mind.

The end of war is but a hopeless dream,
And all the institutions are in vain
That draw the diagrams that lead to peace,
Commendable they are in the attempt,
But doomed to Sisyphean destiny.

Autumnal leaves fall on the battlefield,
Obscuring remnants of the day before,
The broken bodies of the warriors,
Some dead, some writhing on the ground in pain,
All decorated in the red and gold.

Both friend and enemy lie side by side
To be collected and returned to homes
Where mothers' grief can never be assuaged,
Regardless of official messages
From governments expressing their regrets.

“Dear Mrs. So-and-So,” the letters read,
With platitudes about the Patriot
Who sacrificed his life for you and me,
But it was not a sacrifice he made;
His life was taken in a foreign land.

Clichés abound in letters to the kin
Of those who died for reasons no one knows.
Why don't they tell the truth, these panderers
To patriotic jingo images?
Just say it was to arrogance they died.

Sometimes I tire, and all I want is rest,
Away from battle sounds and smell of fear,
Just lie upon a field of summer grass,
And look up past the soft white clouds
To azure skies on high that know no end.



There is no respite for the God of War,
No time to contemplate the universe,
Although I am aware the seeds of war,
Of inhumanity, will multiply
And cannot be destroyed by gods or men.

If I should fall asleep, I'd likely dream
Of gory battles that I've won and lost.
No restful sleep have I experienced,
Nor peaceful dreams of flower-laden fields,
The roses and the poppies turned to blood.

Allow me just a little time away
From all the clamor of the battlefield,
The shouting of the dares and challenges,
A moment's interval of some repose
To meditate, to ponder who I am.

To be continued in the next issue.