

WHO SLEEPS?

MIDNIGHT and England ; in the curtained room
Shadow upon grey shadow creeps,
Till black, all-conquering, dominates the gloom.
And darkness cries—who sleeps?

Who sleeps—the bride? She girt him for the fight,
Gay when her happy warrior went,
Now empty arms she stretches to the night
With passionate lament.

Who sleeps—the old man? Up the wind-swept street
He heard a brown battalion come,
And all long his weary worn old feet
Keep measure with the drum.

Who sleeps—the mother? Immemorial throes
Torture her heart and laboured breath ;
This hour, it may be, her belovèd goes
Undaunted into death.

Who sleeps—the barren woman, for her breast
Passion, nor pain, nor rapture stirs?
She wakes and watches for the first and best,
A thousand sons are hers.

On desolated far-off battle fields, who sleep?
We know not, but through summers green
We know their rigid hands that hold, will keep
The flag of England clean.