



Literary Page

"lest we forget"

CORNETS FOR THE ELEVENTH HOUR

I ELEVENTH MONTH

We are growing old
 Standing here
 Beside these ancient medalled men
 And mothers of the brave
 And dutiful school children
 Handpicked for the honour:
 Poster and poem winners all;
 Scouts, Cadets, Guides, Cubs
 And parents of same -
 Pillars of community -
 All standing
 So solemn
 Listening to extempore monologues
 By model governmental officials.

I am wondering:
 Have they lost their toes
 Like I've lost mine?
 Has this raw and awful cold
 That creeps around behind my ears
 And numbs and nibbles at my nails
 Hard clenched in icy balls
 Numbed them too?
 Am I the only one
 Who didn't plan of this eleventh
 Being so unkind?
 I feel ashamed for not remembering right
 But remembering wrong.

II ELEVENTH DAY

What meaning
 Has it
 For these little ones
 All rigid in the cold
 Who've learnt
 By heart
 "America's Answer to *In Flanders Fields*"
 Knowing nothing
 Of Flanders
 But proudly
 Going about the house
 Enchanting
 "They died for nought"?
 This day follows too hot
 On Halloween:
 The gravestones merge;
 Uneasy thoughts
 Unsettle gentle dreams.

The only men I knew
 Who went -
 Tin-hatted Diggers
 And their clones from
 World Disgrace II
 Men who rushed like lemmings to sign their names -
 Are either reticent or mad;
 Refuse to talk
 Elaborate
 Or fill the gap -
 Our eager understanding.
 "What was it like there, Uncle Bill?"
 "Tell me, uncle Roy."
 Grim silence answers;

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Age has wearied them -
 In deed.
 A blind descends:
 Their mouths and minds hard set
 Against a revelation.
 They'll neither speak in glowing terms
 Of comrades or of country
 Nor yet will cry
 "An end to war!"

And still we stand
 And praise,
 Revere
 The brave, stout-hearted heroes
 We can feel nothing for.
 Most of us are under fifty
 And have been trained to stand here -
 Searching for a lynch pin.

Eighty wars
 I am told
 Are being hammered out
 As you read on.
 Depressing statistics;
 It's not our men,
 Thank God
 The years condemn this time.
 Let me depress you more -
 Wars of attrition
 Peasant wars
 Religious wars
 Internecine wars
 Racial wars
 And civil wars
 Guerilla wars
 City wars
 Scorched country wars
 Cold wars and jungle wars
 Underground wars
 And terrorist wars.

The bitter taste
 Of mud
 And metal smoke
 For those whose numbers come up
 On a ball
 And every side is right -
 And God is with them all.
 We MUST remember this:

The here and now.
 Memory also has a future
 And it lives with us.

III ELEVENTH HOUR

One oppressive minute:
 A long time to fill the head
 With nothing
 But remembering.
 "All those who died
 To keep us free."
 All?
 How to comprehend
 All?
 How to imagine the death
 Of millions
 When I can barely
 Imagine
 The death of one?

We should enact this day
 In shirtsleeves
 In June or August
 Or the eleventh day of every month
 Or hour of every day
 Lest we forget
 The world rides conscience
 On this Act -
 And now it is the eleventh hour.

Flags dip ceremoniously
 While sombre leaders
 Lip their sorrows
 At cenotaphs across the country,
 Their granite hearts all draped in mourning
 At exactly eleven a.m.
 Local standard time.

And while I bow
 My head
 (I never close my eyes)
 I see that there are some
 Like me
 Who wonder, maybe:
 Why not to try to keep the peace
 They signed that day
 That day... that day.
 So this Remembrance Day
 Should be the last
 If what should come of it
 Does.
 "Forget we, lest..." PAMELA J. FULTON

EACH KNIFE THEY CHOOSE TO WEAR
 carnage walls on the screen
 in those nations never seen
 like some steaming battle soup
 flickering from troop to troop
 choice of weapons, choice of place
 all before the numbing face
 there's difficulty drawing lines
 between the fake and real spines
 cracking 'neath the gnashing glare
 of this world hanging bare
 there's difficulty drawing air
 like each sad life they choose to spare
 unlike each knife they choose to wear
 STIRLING LYONS

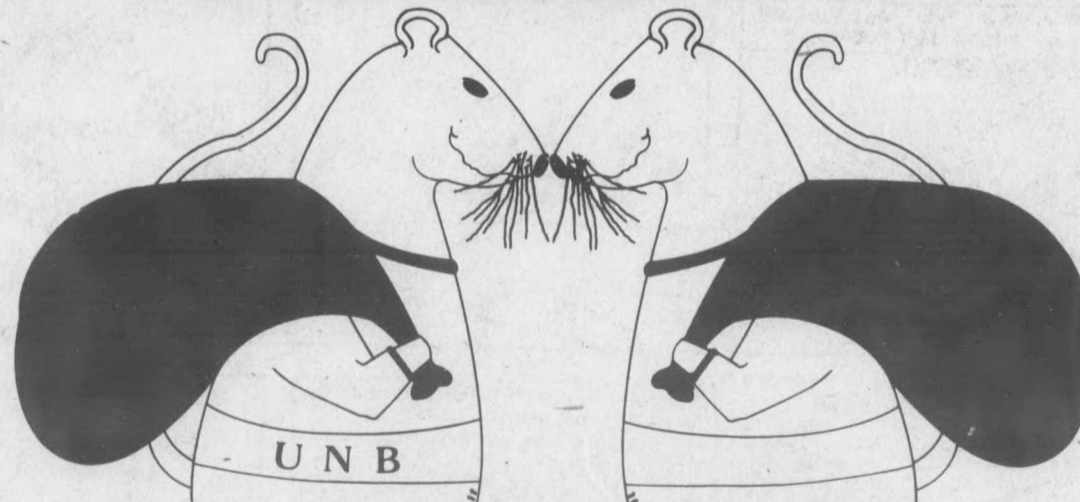


IN HONOR OF THE DEAD AND THOSE
 WHO SURVIVE,
 ALONE WITH THEIR TEARS.

BATTLE OF THE RUHR
 Dark-doomed night in Germany's skies
 and the hellish tracer soon flies
 the hum of the engines and the turret swung
 guns that clatter in the dark of poet's hung
 fury of the devil's washing day
 crushing earth and silence in the way
 the haunting rings in a teacup's swirl
 where old men cry and cigarettes unfurl.
 STIRLING LYONS

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