
The Unknown Warrior

Crowded behind the gun carriage in one long vista was an immense column of men of all branches of the navy and army, moving up slowly before coming to a halt, and behind again other men in civil clothes, and everywhere among them and above them were flowers in the form of wreaths and crosses. Then all was still, and the picture was complete, framing in that coffin, where the steel hat and the King's sword lay upon the flag which draped it. The soul of the nation at its best, purified at this moment by this emotion, was there, in silence, about the dust of that Unknown.

Guns were being fired somewhere in the distance. They were not loud, but like the distant thumping of the guns on a misty day in Flanders when there was "nothing to report," though on such a day, perhaps, this man had died.

Presently there was a far-off wailing, like the cry of a banshee. It was a siren giving the warning of silence in some place by the river. The deep notes of Big Ben struck 11, and then the King turned quickly to the lever behind him, touched it, and let fall the great flags which had draped it. A grim, hard thing, like a pagan altar, as it seemed to me, the cenotaph stood