

A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

time more beautifully appropriate, than the publication of Rupert Brooke's noble sonnet-sequence, '1914,' a few swift weeks before the death they had imagined, and had already made lovely. Each one of these five sonnets faces, in a quiet exultation, the thought of death, of death for England; and understands, as seldom even English poetry has understood, the unspeakable beauty of the thought:

"These laid the world away; poured out the red
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be
Of work and joy, und that unhop'd serene
That men call age; and those who would have been,
Their sons, they gave—their immortality.

I am strangely mistaken if the accent of the noblest English poetry does not speak to us in those lines. And again:

"If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's breathing, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, hleat by suns of home.

"This—this music, this beauty, this courage—was Rupert Brooke. But it is, we may be sure, his immortality. It is not yet tolerable to speak of personal loss. The name seemed to stand for a magical vitality that must be safe—safe! Yes, 'and if these poor limbs die, safest of all!' What poetry has lost in him cannot be judged by any one who has not read those last sonnets, now his farewell to England and the world. I am not underrating the rest of his work. There was an intellectual keenness and brightness in it, a fire of imagery and (in the best sense) wit, the like of which had not been known, or known only in snatches, in our literature since the best days of the later Elizabethans. And it was all penetrated by a mastering passion, the most elemental of all passions—the passion for life. 'I have been so great a lover,' he cries, and artfully leads us on to think he means the usual passion of a young poet's career. But it is