

THE DIGGER

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A FACT OF REALITY.

I'm looking at their blistered feet;
young Jones
Stares up at me, mud-splashed and
white and jaded;
Out of his eyes, the morning light has
faded.
Old soldiers with three winters in their
bones
Puff their damp Woodbines, whistle,
stretch their toes:
THEY can still grin at me, for each
of 'em knows
That I'm as tired as they are
Can they guess
The secret burden that is always
mine?—
Pride in their courage; pity for their
distress;
That I must take them to the accursed
Line.
I cannot hear their voices, but I see
Dim candles in the barn; they gulp
their tea,
And soon they'll sleep like logs. Ten
miles away
The battle winks and thuds in blund-
ering strife.
And I must lead them nearer, day by
day,
To the foul beasts of war that blud-
geons life.

Their lives are like the leaves
Scattered in flocks, of ruin, tossed and
blown
Along the western furnace, flaring red.
O martyred youth and manhood over-
thrown,
The burden of your wrongs is on my
head.
What invalid soldier does not know
these thoughts, entitled "Sick Leave"

When I'm asleep, dreaming and lulled
and warm—
They come the homeless ones, the noise-
less dead.
While the dim charging breakers of
the storm
Bellow, and drone, and rumble over-
head,
Out of the gloom they gather about my
bed,
And whisper to my heart; their
thoughts are mine,

"Why are you here with all your
watches ended?
From Ypres to Frise we sought you
in the Line."

In bitter safety I awake, unfriended;
And while the dawn begins with slash-
ing rain
I think of the Battalion in the mud.
"When are you going out to them
again?
Are they not still your brothers through
our blood?"

The Dyaks of Borneo pile up heaps of
branches of trees to the memory of a per-
son who tells a great lie, so that future
generations may not forget his iniquity.

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