

The Women to the Men Returned

By Margaret Sackville

You cannot speak to us nor we reply :
You learnt a different language where men die,
Are mutilated, maddened, blinded, torn
To tatters of red flesh, mown down like corn,
Crucified, starved, tormented. Oh! forgive
Us, who whilst all men died could bear to live
Happy—almost, excited, glad—almost,
Extravagantly, counting not the cost—
The cost *you* paid in silence. Now speech is vain,
We cannot understand nor you explain
Your passion and your anguish; we are deaf
And blind to all save customary grief.
How shall our foolish consolations reach
Trouble which lies so deeper far than speech.
It ruffles not the surface—dark it lies,
Hid from all eyes, but mostly from *our* eyes,
Which though they wept for sons and lovers dead
(Our *own* sons, our *own* lovers) have not *bled*
Tears—have not wept such drops of blood and flame,
They must have saved the world for very shame.
Forgive us, then, for all our useless tears,
And for our courage and patience all those years.
Oh! you can love us still, laugh with us, smile,
But in your haunted spirits all the while,
Tortured and throbbing like a nerve laid bare,
Lie sleepless memories we dare not share.
Your secret thought—what is it? We do not know;
Never such gulf divorced you from the foe
As now divides us, for how may you tell
What Hell is to us who only read of Hell?
Your souls elude us in some lonely place
Uncomforted, beings of a different race.
Have you our flesh—our flesh and blood become :
You cannot answer us—you are dumb, you are dumb!

