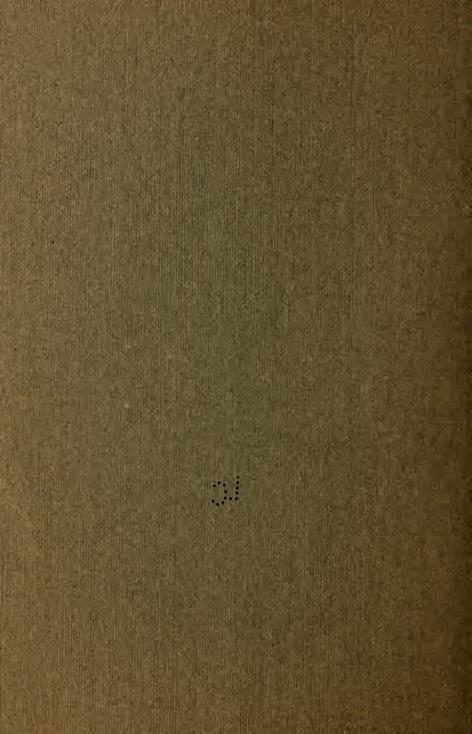
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BATTLE

WILFRID WILSON GIBSON

AND THOR OF " DAILY BREAD," "FIRES," "BORDERLANDS AND THOROUGHFARES," TC.

> New York THE MACMILLAN COMPANY



BY WILFRID WILSON GIBSON

AUTHOR OF "DAILY BREAD," "FIRES," "BORDERLANDS AND THOROUGHFARES," ETC.



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BEFORE ACTION

I sit beside the brazier's glow, And, drowsing in the heat, I dream of daffodils that blow And lambs that frisk and bleat—

Black lambs that frolic in the snow Among the daffodils, In a far orchard that I know Beneath the Malvern hills.

Next year the daffodils will blow, And lambs will frisk and bleat; But I'll not feel the brazier's glow, Nor any cold or heat.

THE BAYONET

This bloody steel Has killed a man. I heard him squeal As on I ran.

He watched me come With wagging head. I pressed it home, And he was dead.

Though clean and clear I've wiped the steel, I still can hear That dying squeal.

THE QUESTION

I wonder if the old cow died or not.

Gey bad she was the night I left, and sick.

Dick reckoned she would mend. He knows a lot—

At least he fancies so himself, does Dick.

Dick knows a lot. But maybe I did wrong To leave the cow to him, and come away. Over and over like a silly song These words keep bumming in my head all day.

And all I think of, as I face the foe And take my lucky chance of being shot, Is this—that if I'm hit, I'll never know Till Doomsday if the old cow died or not.

DEAF

This day last year I heard the curlew calling By Hallypike And the clear tinkle of hill-waters falling Down slack and syke.

But now I cannot hear the shrapnel's screaming,

The screech of shells:

And if again I see the blue lough gleaming Among the fells

Unheard of me will be the curlew's calling By Hallypike And the clear tinkle of hill-waters falling Down slack and syke.

MAD

MAD

Neck-deep in mud, He mowed and raved— He who had braved The field of blood—

And as a lad Just out of school Yelled: "April fool!" And laughed like mad.

RAINING

The night I left my father said: "You'll go and do some stupid thing. You've no more sense in that fat head Than Silly Billy Witterling.

"Not sense to come in when it rains— Not sense enough for that, you've got. You'll get a bullet through your brains, Before you know, as like as not."

And now I'm lying in the trench And shells and bullets through the night Are raining in a steady drench, I'm thinking the old man was right.

SPORT

SPORT

And such a morning for cubbing— The dew so thick on the grass! Two hares are lolloping just out of range Scattering the dew as they pass.

A covey of partridge whirrs overhead Scatheless, and gets clean away; For it's other and crueller, crafteir game We're out for and after to-day!

HIS FATHER

I quite forgot to put the spigot in. It's just come over me. . . . And it is queer To think he'll not care if we lose or win And yet be jumping-mad about that beer.

I left it running full. He must have said A thing or two. I'd give my stripes to hear What he will say if I'm reported dead Before he gets me told about that beer!

THE DANCERS

THE DANCERS

All day beneath the hurtling shells Before my burning eyes Hover the dainty demoiselles— The peacock dragon-flies.

Unceasingly they dart and glance Above the stagnant stream— And I am fighting here in France As in a senseless dream—

A dream of shattering black shells That hurtle overhead, And dainty dancing demoiselles Above the dreamless dead.

VICTORY

I watched it oozing quietly Out of the gaping gash. The lads thrust on to victory With lunge and curse and crash.

Half-dazed, that uproar seemed to me Like some old battle-sound Heard long ago, as quietly His blood soaked in the ground.

The lads thrust on to victory With lunge and crash and shout. I lay and watched, as quietly His life was running out.

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