

Trafalgar Square

Fool that I was! my heart was sore,
Yea, sick for the myriad wounded men,
The maim'd in the war: I had grief for each one:
And I came in the gay September sun
To the open smile of Trafalgar Square,
Where many a lad with a limb foredone
Loll'd by the lion-guarded column
That holdeth Nelson statued thereon
Upright in the air.

The Parliament towers, and the Abbey towers,
The white Horseguards and grey Whitehall,
He looketh on all,
Past Somerset House and the river's bend
To the pillar'd dome of St. Paul,
That slumbers, confessing God's solemn blessing
On Britain's glory, to keep it ours —
While children true her prowess renew
And throng from the ends of the earth to defend
Freedom and honour — till Earth shall end.

The gentle unjealous Shakespeare, I trow,
In his country grave of peaceful fame
Must feel exiled from life and glow,
If he thinks of this man with his warrior claim,
Who looketh on London as if 't were his own,
As he standeth in stone, aloft and alone,
Sailing the sky, with one arm and one eye.

Robert Bridges
(October, 1917)