

## Channel Firing

Thomas Hardy

That night your great guns, unawares,  
Shook all our coffins as we lay,  
And broke the chancel window-squares,  
We thought it was the Judgment Day

And sat upright. While drearisome  
Arose the howl of wakened hounds:  
The mouse let fall the altar-crumb,  
The worms drew back into the mounds,

The glebe cow drooled. Till God called, "No;  
It's gunnery practice out at sea  
Just as before you went below;  
The world is as it used to be:

"All nations striving strong to make  
Red war yet redder. Mad as hatters  
They do no more for Christes sake  
Than you who are helpless in such matters.

'That this is not the judgment-hour  
For some of them's a blessed thing,  
For if it were they'd have to scour  
Hell's floor for so much threatening . . .

"Ha, ha. It will be warmer when  
I blow the trumpet (if indeed  
I ever do; for you are men,  
And rest eternal sorely need).'

So down we lay again. "I wonder,  
Will the world ever saner be,"  
Said one, "than when He sent us under  
In our indifferent century!"

And many a skeleton shook his head.  
"Instead of preaching forty year,"  
My neighbor Parson Thirdly said,  
"I wish I had stuck to pipes and beer."

Again the guns disturbed the hour,  
Roaring their readiness to avenge,  
As far inland as Stourton Tower,  
And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge.

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## Men Who March Away

Thomas Hardy

What of the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away  
Ere the barn-cocks say  
Night is growing gray,  
To hazards whence no tears can win us;  
What of the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away!

Is it a purblind prank, O think you  
Friend with the musing eye  
Who watch us stepping by  
With doubt and dolorous sigh?  
Can much pondering so hoodwink you?  
Is it a purblind prank, O think you,  
Friend with the musing eye?

Nay. We see well what we are doing,  
Though some may not see--  
Dalliers as they be--  
England's need are we;  
Her distress would leave us rueing:  
Nay. We well see what we are doing,  
Though some may not see!

In our heart of hearts believing  
Victory crowns the just,  
And that braggarts must  
Surely bite the dust,  
Press we to the field ungrieving,  
In our heart of hearts believing  
Victory crowns the just.

Hence the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away  
Ere the barn-cocks say  
Night is growing gray,  
To hazards whence no tears can win us;  
Hence the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away.