

Bourne
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workshops

War in some other universe

by Steve Brown

The war began in all the gestures of exhaustion:
hands, too tired to ring the peals of bells;
eyes, dry from all the bitter resignations.
They knew now too clearly where this all
would end. And then each year, new bodies
jumping from the ground, bent saplings springing
back; each year, some fresh amnesias swimming:
words shook off grey weight, place-names lightened.
Groans, screams, sprung from the air, all swallowed.
Fire, splinters, bones were compacted down
to solid shapes: of gleaming metal,
of well-scrubbed flesh; torn faces resolved
into fixed smiles. Each year, more curing damages,
a world finding back its colours:
churned fields, become a sea of golden corn.
Both sides advanced to their anticipated
triumphs; weapons, cooled down to fluttered
ribbons. Flowers were gently placed
upon torn stalks. By the end, the world
was simple blocks of colour, postage stamps,
marked with the watery eyes, smug mutton-chops
of kings. Everyone had wakened,
finding themselves badged with horrible shining
innocence.

1918 - 1914