

1914

THE SOLDIER

(From 1914) Rupert Brooke

Brooke, Rupert (1887-1915) - British poet. Described as “a golden young Apollo,” he travelled widely before receiving a commission in the Royal Navy at the outbreak of World War I. Never reaching his assignment in the Dardanelles, he died of blood poisoning on board a French hospital ship. The Soldier (1914) One of five sonnets Brooke wrote while training for World War I, musing on his personal debt to England as his fellow soldiers slept around him. Opening line: If I should die, think only this of me:

SOLDIER

If I should die, think only this of me:

That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England.
There shall be In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

THE END