

**CRANE  
STEPHEN**

WAR IS KIND

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*War is Kind:*

# Stephen Crane

## War is Kind

Do not weep, maiden, for war is kind.  
Because your lover threw wild hands toward the sky  
And the affrighted steed ran on alone,  
Do not weep.  
War is kind.

Hoarse, booming drums of the  
regiment,  
Little souls who thirst for fight,  
These men were born to drill and die.  
The unexplained glory files above  
them,  
Great is the battle-god, great, and his  
kingdom—;  
A field where a thousand corpses lie.

Do not weep, babe, for war is kind.  
Because your father tumbled in the yellow  
trenches,  
Raged at his breast, gulped and died,  
Do not weep.  
War is kind.

Swift blazing flag of the regiment,

Eagle with crest of red and gold,  
These men were born to drill and die.  
Point for them the virtue of the slaughter,  
Make plain to them the excellence of killing  
And a field where a thousand corpses  
lie.

Mother whose heart hung humble as a button  
On the bright splendid shroud of your son,  
Do not weep.  
War is kind.

What says the sea, little shell?

“What says the sea?

“Long has our brother been silent to us,

“Kept his message for the ships,

“Awkward ships, stupid ships.”

“The sea bids you mourn, O Pines,

“Sing low in the moonlight.

“He sends tale of the land of doom,

“Of place where endless falls

“A rain of women's tears,

“And men in grey robes—

“Men in grey robes—

“Chant the unknown pain.”

“What says the sea, little shell?

“What says the sea?

“Long has our brother been silent to us,  
“Kept is message for the ships,  
“Puny ships, silly ships.”

“The sea bids you teach, O Pines,  
“Sing low in the moonlight;  
“Teach the gold of patience,  
“Cry gospel of gentle hands,  
“Cry a brotherhood of hearts.  
“The sea bids you teach, O Pines.”

“And where is the reward, little shell?  
“What says the sea?  
“Long has our brother been silent to us,  
“Kept his message for the ships,  
“Puny ships, silly ships.”

“No word says the sea, O Pines,  
“No word says the sea.  
“Long will your brother be silent to you,  
“Keep his message for the ships,  
“O puny ships, silly pines.”

To the maiden  
The sea was blue meadow,  
Alive with little froth-people  
Singing.

To the sailor, wrecked,

The sea was dead grey walls  
Superlative in vacancy,  
Upon which nevertheless at fateful time  
Was written  
The grim hatred of nature.

A little ink more or less!  
It surely can't matter?  
Even the sky and the opulent sea,  
The plains and the hills, aloof,  
Hear the uproar of all these books.  
But it is only a little ink more or less.

What?  
You define me God with these trinkets?  
Can my misery meal on an ordered walking  
Of surpliced numskulls?  
And a fanfare of lights?  
Or even upon the measured pulpittings  
Of the familiar false and true?  
Is this God?  
Where, then is hell?  
Show me some bastard mushrooms  
Sprung from a pollution of blood.  
It is better.

Where is God?

“Have you ever made a just man?”

“Oh, I have made three,” answered

God,

“But two of them are dead,

“And the third—

“Listen! Listen!

“And you will hear the thud of his defeat.”

I explain the silvered passing of a ship

at night,

The sweep of each sad lost wave,

The dwindling boom of the steel thing's striving,

The little cry of a man to a man,

A shadow falling across the greyer night,

And the sinking of the small star;

Then the waste, the far waste of waters,

And the soft lashing of black waves

For long and in loneliness.

Remember, thou, O ship of love,

Thou leavest a far waste of waters,

And the soft lashing of black waves

For long and in loneliness.

“I have heard the sunset song of the

birches,

“A white melody in the silence,

“I have seen a quarrel of the pines.

“At nightfall

“The little grasses have rushed by me

“With the wind men.

“These things have I lived,” quoth the  
maniac,

“Possessing only eyes and ears.

“But you—

“You don green spectacles before you look at roses.”

Fast rode the knight

With spurs, hot and reeking,

Ever waving an eager sword,

“To save my lady!”

Fast rode the knight,

And leaped from saddle to war.

Men of steel flickered and gleamed

Like riot of silver lights,

And the gold of the knight's good banner

Still waved on a castle wall.

. . . . .  
A horse,

Blowing, staggering, bloody thing,

Forgotten at foot of castle wall.

A horse

Dead at foot of castle wall.

Forth went the candid man

And spoke freely to the wind—

When he looked about him he was in a far  
strange country.

Forth went the candid man  
And spoke freely to the stars—  
Yellow light tore sight from his eye.

“My good fool,” said a learned bystander,  
“Your operations are mad.”

“You are too candid,” cried the candid man.  
And when his stick left the head of the  
learned bystander  
It was two sticks.

You tell me this is God?  
I tell you this is a printed list,  
A burning candle and an ass.

On the desert  
A silence from the moon's deepest  
valley.  
Fire rays fall athwart the robes

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