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Undertones of War

Edmund Blunden

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“I took my road with no little pride of fear; one morning I feared very sharply, as I saw what looked like a rising shroud over a wooden cross in the clustering mist. Horror! But on a closer study I realized that the apparition was only a flannel gas helmet. . . . What an age since 1914!”

In *Undertones of War*, one of the finest autobiographies to come out of World War I, the acclaimed poet Edmund Blunden records his devastating experiences in combat. After enlisting at the age of twenty, he took part in the disastrous battles at the Somme, Ypres, and Passchendaele, describing them as “murder, not only to the troops but to their singing faiths and hopes.”

All the horrors of trench warfare, all the absurdity and feeble attempts to make sense of the fighting, all the strangeness of observing war as a writer—of being simultaneously soldier and poet—pervade Blunden’s memoir. In steely-eyed prose as richly allusive as any poetry, he tells of the endurance and despair found among the men of his battalion, including the harrowing acts of bravery that won him the Military Cross.

Now back in print for American readers, the volume includes a selection of Blunden’s war poems that unflinchingly juxtapose death in the trenches with the beauty of Flanders’s fields. *Undertones of War* deserves a place on anyone’s bookshelf between Siegfried Sassoon’s poetry and Robert Graves’s *Goodbye to All That*.

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