The Works of Stefan George

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THE COMRADE IN ARMS

I

It was where deer frequent the pool
That after dangers which beset
Our burning quests we stopped to cool
Our foreheads from the battle's sweat.

And now my brother is asleep
— Today the clash of swords was keen —
And I am proud that I may keep
The rest of such a heart serene.

He leaned against his shield, I took
His head upon my knees, his cheek
Had something of a tender look,
His bearded lip was stern and bleak.

In gloomy woods where evil coils
From many a bond he succoured me,
When nettles caught me in their toils
With flashing fist he hewed me free.

When I was lured by siren sounds,
Forgot his counsel to desist,
And mounted to forbidden bounds
He held me firmly by the wrist.

He never wavers or delays,
The wicked know his rage is swift,
The poor who kneel upon his ways
Receive his fortune as a gift.

He never will permit me other
Than straightest course before the Lord.
Of wax and iron is my brother,
And I am glad to be his ward.
II

Yet he was trapped by crafty foes, with few
And faithful men against a horde he vied,
He fell, but by the grace of heaven knew
The victory was his, before he died.

And to his burial even princes came,
The eulogies of friends, the muffled lilt
Of prayers and the drone of trumpets built
An arch to witness bright and early fame.

Now he is dead, where shall I turn? What hand
Will keep the hounds of ruthless life at bay?
Without his greatness I shall die. Oh, may
It not be too inglorious an end!

A KNIGHT GROWING FORGETFUL

Muted clangour! Do I hear
Horses being saddled? Spear
Whirring? From the terrace flow
Cries of fear?

Only doors that creak below.

Guests who laugh and jest? Dispatch
Of the men who come and go
Under eaves with leafy thatch?
Merry watch?

Tender strings? A singing sigh
Under fingers slim and slow?
Has a Golden Age slipped by,
Fair and shy?

Only doors that creak below.