



These are the three poems used in *Strange Hells*:

Frederic Manning (1882-1935)

Grotesque

These are the damned circles Dante trod,
Terrible in hopelessness,
But even skulls have their humour,
An eyeless and sardonic mockery:
And we,
Sitting with streaming eyes in the acrid smoke,
That murks our foul, damp billet,
Chant bitterly, with raucous voices
As a choir of frogs
In hideous irony, our patriotic songs.

Francis Ledwidge (1887-1917)

To a German Officer

I cannot think that God could take
A man who fought on Mammon's side
Nor yet in brimstone cavern break
A noble soul's ancestral pride

There is a No Man's Land,
I hold Kept by a truce of Heaven and Hell
And in their dug-out made of gold
The brave of there forever dwell

And greater peace than swords have fought
Flashing in emprises divine
Shuts up their memories in one thought
That hears the quiet waves of the Rhine.

Ivor Gurney (1890-1937)

Strange Hells

There are strange Hells within the minds War made
Not so often, not so humiliating afraid
As one would have expected – the racket and fear guns made.

One Hell the Gloucester soldiers they quite put out;
Their first bombardment, when in combined black shout
Of fury, guns aligned, they ducked low their heads
And sang with diaphragms fixed beyond all dreads,
That tin and stretched-wire tinkle, that blither of tune;
“Après la guerre fini” till Hell all had come down,
Twelve-inch, six-inch, and eighteen pounders hammering Hell's thunders.

Where are they now on State-doles, or showing shop patterns
Or walking town to town sore in borrowed tatterns
Or begged. Some civic routine one never learns.
The heart burns – but has to keep out of face how heart burns.