

Lambata Mortilor 1918

~~It is~~ Lambata Mortilor . . . the day set apart for the dead. Lambata Mortilor: a day of remembrance, a day of grief, a day when flowers are carried to the cemeteries, a day when little tapers are lighted upon many graves, before many altars; a day when from all churches prayers rise towards the skies, prayers for those that are no more . . . no more here upon earth . . . .

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How many today will be praying for the dead? At this time last year, we were in full action; ~~this year~~ <sup>now</sup> a heavy silence lies over our country, all excitement has died down and with it, the enthusiasm that upheld our spirits, giving us hope amidst adversity, courage in spite of the great dangers that stared us in the face.

Last year <sup>on this day</sup> the dead lay under the sod, patiently awaiting the hour when those who were still fighting, should have time to remember

them, time to light tapers over their graves...  
 and they were glad thus to wait. <sup>Just</sup> Down there  
 with crossed hands and closed eyes, they gladly  
 waited, for ~~others~~ <sup>not others</sup> were carrying on the struggle that  
 they had begun, that they had shared in, the  
 struggle that was to bring victory, deliverance  
 and glory.....

This year the cannons have stopped their  
 sinister calling, the trenches are being filled  
 up again, the sound of battle no longer shakes  
 the mountain sides, no more blood is being  
 spilt, there is silence - but is it the silence of  
 peace?

Lambata mortilor! This year the dead  
 may be remembered, those that had joined ~~our~~  
 forces for a goodly fight, have let the sword  
 fall from their hands; today they <sup>have come to</sup> ~~can~~ turn their  
 feet towards the shadowy sanctuaries, where  
 mothers, wives, sisters and little children  
 are praying for the dead.

I too am on my knees, praying for dead.

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I have fled into the silence of the hills, and there,  
not far from the battle-fields of yesterday, I  
pray with all my soul for those who gave their  
lives for a dream they believed in, for a dream  
I shared with them — for a dream that faded  
... But that is not dead.

I have learnt to pray during these years of  
tribulation. In happier days I thought I under-  
stood the meaning of prayer, but since I have  
lived in sorrow, I think I have learnt to pray  
differently, that when I talk to my God, my  
voice has another sound.

Oh! but how I long to be in communication with those  
that are no more, how I long to talk to the dead.  
In my hours of doubt, when no light seems to reach  
my soul, I would like to cry out to them: that their  
share is lost — that some battles are worse than  
death, battles that have to be fought in silence, battles  
that last and last, till courage wanes and the heart  
becomes old and weary & sick... But I, their Queen  
must send them another message, over into the  
silence

must not be one of discouragement (4)

that separates me from them — my message, <sup>but</sup> ~~must~~ <sup>must</sup> still be one of hope!

Once, long ago, before the great suffering came over us, I put strange words into the mouth of a sovereign who ~~only~~ <sup>existed only</sup> ~~lived~~ in one of the legends I loved to create. In an hour of distress that sovereign cried aloud, asking if one heart can be large enough to carry every sorrow, if one brain can be wise enough to lead millions to their good, if one courage can be great enough to meet every foe, if one soul can be just enough to sit in judgement on others — little knowing that one day, so soon afterwards, those same questions would <sup>also</sup> be mine — and the cry that rises from my lips at this hour is: can one heart be large enough to carry every sorrow! and that a woman's heart!

Oh! ye dead to whom I am talking today can ye realise what it means to be chattered of a torn and bleeding country, whose every child turns to hear, asking for help, for help

for food, for clothing, for encouragement, for justice, <sup>and</sup> for hope! ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> a mother who has become poor herself! whose hands are tied, whose tongue is tied, who, with anguished eyes star around her, wondering whence help can still come! And ~~to~~ <sup>when</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>has</sup> to stand up meeting her fate without flinching, without giving either sign of fatigue or despair.

On this day set apart for the dead, I want for a while to tear myself away from the ~~voice~~ <sup>voices</sup> of the living and seek refuge with you who have found silence and peace and rest, so that something of that peace should come to my soul from the unknown regions into which you have flown.

There are many things I want to tell you today and <sup>the first</sup> ~~one~~ of them is: that <sup>I consider that</sup> the living have a debt to <sup>towards</sup> the dead; and that because of that debt, my courage shall not fail me, that even if at times, I am poor of spirit and ~~am~~ <sup>am</sup> tired of the voices of the living, I nevertheless

shall hold on because of the dead... yes because of  
the dead...

Then I want you also to know that I know your  
graves, your many many graves; that I search out  
your places of rest, however far and scattered they  
may be, that I go to them wherever I can, whenever  
I can.

I have climbed to solitary spots where single cross-  
es stand, looking to me from steep mountain-  
sides, spots where the bitterest battles were fought  
and when you fell suddenly, face to the enemy, to  
be hurriedly buried by friend or by foe, so that  
no name is carved upon the rough boards that  
mark the end of your road.

I have also been to big, well-tended cemeteries  
where in tidy rows you lie side by side, often  
ten of you in one grave, cemeteries, where flowers  
have been planted and where small children  
and weeping women come to pray for the rest of  
your souls.

To desolate, forsaken little grave-yards

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have I been, where bare mounds are huddled together like sheep lost in the desert. Lonely little heaps, over which the wind tears, chanting dirges other voices were no there to ring, melancholy, miserable little graves, that few visit, of which the crosses look tired and depressed and that the dust of the high roads covers with ~~their~~ pall of grey.

I have been to greener spots, where it ~~was~~ <sup>is</sup> sweeter to lie; where tall trees stood like patient sentinels that ~~weather~~ <sup>with</sup> time nor seasons can tire. And once, as the sun was setting I came to a quiet convent, ~~church~~ where the bravest of the brave lay beneath the shadow of an <sup>old</sup> wooden church. A weather-beaten building grey with age that conferred on it a dignity and beauty, it had probably never possessed in its youth. It stood in a wooded hollow, shut in by giant beeches ~~that~~ that Spring had decked with tenderest green. Three venerable apple trees, bending beneath

the weight of their blossoms, grew close to the church as though protecting with their drooping branches ~~of those who slept~~ ~~the graves that lay~~ beneath them.

The ~~last~~ <sup>last</sup> rays of the sun hovered <sup>lightly</sup> over everything like a blessing, touching with divine radiance forest, flowers and the rustic crosses that marked ed the graves of the dead.

I have sometimes come quite unexpectedly upon single crosses standing like lost souls at the side of the road, or at the outskirts of a wood or sometimes man high, overlooking the plain from a bare height, like a silent watcher put there on guard. All these crosses <sup>are</sup> of rough wood, loosely put together, gone grey beneath sun and rain. Before each have I paused to murmur a silent prayer.

But the place I go to most often, is the grave-yard close by the hospital near the front, where last year I used to work.

It lies high above a river that flows from bluey mountains down towards



the widening plains.

From the land of <sup>my</sup> childhood, seeds and bulbs had been sent me, <sup>by my friends</sup> to plant or sow upon these humble graves, sent by friends owing to the length of the road they had made till they reached me, many of the plants were too dry to grow, and as this year the heavens were against <sup>my and</sup> no rain ~~rain~~ came to soften the earth, few of those flowers from that far-distant country lived to bloom on my soldier's graves.

Yet a few <sup>hand-picked</sup> bravely pierced the dry and stony ground, shooting up in stars of white, pink, or purple like a sweet miracle it is difficult to understand.

Four ragged shepherd-boys help me to keep tidy this small garden of rest; they shared with me the mystery of those fragile flowers that had been sent me from over the seas. With large dark eyes full of wonder they looked up into my face when I told them that I, their Queen, had also come from that far-  
far

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country to share their joys, sorrows and griefs, and I related to them about that other people, so strong and faithful, that people that are also fighting for the same great cause...

I taught them to care for this place of peace, taught them that the dead must be honoured always - above all those, fallen for their country's sake. They understood my words, and when I am absent, it is they who look after my graves.

Generally it is at the hour of dusk, that I visit my silent sleepers, and I am always closely followed by my bare-footed shepherds who talk of this cemetery as of a very precious garden loved by their queen...

With them I wander about amidst the graves and remember those that lie there, many of which had breathed their last sighs into my heart.

A tall oak cross, erected in the centre stands, huge and solid against a horizon - a cross that

can be seen from far. . . . At the hour when the sun is sinking it becomes shadowy and seems to grow excessively and to stretch out it's arms towards the burning skies, ~~but~~ beneath, the silvery rivers reflect the glow from above, ~~the~~ water becomes reader and reader, as though from ~~mysterious~~ <sup>secret</sup> depths the blood of many sacrifices were dying it's slow flowing floods. . . .

After have I stood beneath the shade of that great cross, watching the mystery of the sun's farewell to the day, drinking into my soul the sad world's beauty whilst my lips murmured prayers for the dead.

Sambata' kortilor - and is it not natural that on this day of all days, I should return to that garden of peace, there to ponder over the sacrifice of so many young lives that perchance may seem to have been thrown away in vain. . . . Oh so many tears, so much suffering, so many death-  
 oris

so many mourners, when the goal was not reached? what does it mean? what does it mean oh! ye dead!

Perhaps ye are wiser now than we are, and ye understand, and ye do not regret. Perhaps ye are in a world where strife and hatred does not exist, in a world where you can meet your foe face to face and remember only that he too died bravely for a cause in which he believed!

But ~~now we are~~ <sup>has remained with us,</sup> and the heavy burden of the tears of those who weep; perhaps it is because their eyes are blinded by tears that those upon earth cannot see clearly what lies beyond? ~~we~~

Our road was long and thorny, ~~was~~ <sup>is</sup> strewn with shattered illusions and broken dreams, but do ye think that we have reached the end. Somehow I cannot think, oh! ye silent ones, that this <sup>really</sup> can be the end of our road. . . .

Over there in the home to which I do not

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yet dare to return, there is a small tomb that  
awaits me, a small tomb that others have secretly  
tended beneath the stones of ~~many~~ <sup>those</sup> who were  
not friends, whilst I was sowing flowers on your  
many fold graves, but at those hours of sunset  
when I stood amongst you in that far-away  
place, it was as though from all that surrounded  
me, I were turning my yearning face towards  
that far-off ~~lonely~~ <sup>spit</sup> tomb. . .

He was my great sacrifice, the great "why"  
my soul asked of Fate. Yet perchance it  
was written that he should be torn for me  
in a ~~tragic hour~~ <sup>of darkness</sup>, so as to remain there as  
guardian, as a link with the things that had  
been. Lonely little sleeper in the old church  
in the old home, patiently he ~~waits~~ <sup>lies</sup> there, as ye  
fallen ones, scattered far and wide, also lie in  
perfect silence, awaiting the hour of resurrec-  
tion — that hour when all shall arise!

But turning my face back from the dead  
to the living, this message would I cry out

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to those still sorrowing here upon earth:  
Ye are taught to believe in <sup>the hour of</sup> resurrection, with  
every fibre of our beings let us cling to that  
faith, let not your souls be shaken by adver-  
sity, believe me O! ye sorrowers, <sup>that</sup> that hour will  
come, and when it comes, of this let me tell  
you, when that hour comes, it will not only be  
a resurrection of the dead! . . . . .

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1.  
Bucarest

There is an hour of which I have never spoken - an hour of darkness and sorrow that I could share with no one, an hour when I had to carry my head very high so that none should see the tears in my eyes, an hour when naught else remained to me but look beyond the things of this earth towards shadowy Futures that belong only to God.

I had to be strong at that hour, not to cry out, not to complain, but to lead the way into exile very singly, very quietly, so as to avoid all panic, so that no one should be afraid . . . . . others depended upon me



(2)  
all eyes were turned towards me  
to see how I would bear that which  
was unbearable, so I was silent;  
at that hour silence alone could help.

Three months have passed since  
then, three long months - months  
that could be years so full are they  
of anguish and pain and grief.  
Months that I have lived close to the  
heart of my people, months when I  
have heard their cries, and loved  
their hopes and feared their fears.  
Months in which I have struggled  
with them and wept with them  
and <sup>doing</sup> done all that was in my power  
to ease their burden and <sup>to</sup> dry their  
their tears.....

But if there are hours when silence alone can render bearable the duty one has to perform, there are others when one has a right to lift up one's voice and to cry out one's longing & one's regret.

It is three months ~~today~~ since Bucharest was taken from us, since the enemy struck at the heart of our land! Three months... and today I want all those who love and all those who weep and all those who regret to turn their faces with mine toward that far off distance and to remember that which we have lost...

It is to me as though I must climb some very high mountain, up up till I

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reach its summit, so that from there I might perceive at least the smoke rising from that town which once was our loved and cherished center and that now lies chained and silent 'neath the enemy's relentless sway.

Yes indeed, heart of our land! pulsing centre that held us together, fed our energies and filled us with pride — ~~to~~ Who of us will ever forget those last days of anguish, when hope became always less when from all sides the voice of the cannon called out its fearful message, called out its warning, telling us that danger was coming ever nearer — that soon it would be flight and exile and sorrow and darkness . . .

Difficult it is to speak of one's own sorrow when the suffering of all was so great, yet if today I speak of mine, it is because I know that it is my country's sorrow, that a thousand thousand voices are echo to mine when I talk of that for which we are mourning, of that which lies beyond the line of fire, that like a wound upon a mother's breast cuts our dear country in two!

It is I your Queen who am speaking to you, and I wish my voice to reach every heart, to penetrate into every home, to go towards the most miserable, to search out the hero on his bed of snow, I want ye all to know that I have wept with you, that there are none of your griefs that I

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have not shared, none of your despair that I  
have not understood, none of your sacrific-  
es that I have not appreciated ~~and~~ <sup>but</sup> this  
message would I bring you: hearts are  
bound more closely together in days of  
sorrow than in days of joy, in days of war  
than in days of peace. . . .

I cannot know for which special  
sorrow each man is mourning - I  
know not what house, what spot, what  
face he sees in his dreams, I  
know not to what hope he clings to  
what joy he desires to go back;  
there is a national <sup>sorrow</sup> and there is a  
personal <sup>last</sup> sorrow, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> this one each  
each man carries alone in his heart.  
Bucharest! thy name conjures up

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pictures without end in the mind of those who have been obliged to surrender thee to the hated foe. We remember thee with all thy faces, in sunshine in rain and in snow, we remember thee busy yet smiling, within thy streets all seemed happy. It is to us, now that we are torn from thee, as though we had known naught but joy within thy embrace.

What is thy face of today Oh! Bucarest? Hast thou veiled thyself in mourning because so many of thy children have fled? or dost thou wear a smile of false <sup>acquiescence</sup> ~~acquiescence~~, so as not to draw down upon <sup>thy trembling inhabitants</sup> ~~thee~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~wrath~~ of those who now call themselves masters and who perchance

keep thee in better order than thine own children ever did! <sup>proudest buildings,</sup>  
Have thy palaces and thy house-tops been desecrated with flags that are not dyed in the three holy colors before which each Roumanian uncovers his head? Have the blinds of thy windows been drawn down so that those who have remained should not see men in pointed helmets marching to and fro before the house of thy King? Are the hospitals we prepared so tenderly for our wounded, filled with foreigners that speak not our language, that mock at our sorrow, rejoicing over the misery they have strewn over our land?

Oh! Bucarest I left thee without a word

of farewell, I who so often have been ac-  
claimed in the streets! I was told that I  
must steal away from thee in silence,  
show no sorrow, say no good-bye, betraying  
no emotion so as to awaken no panic  
in the hearts of those who were to stay!

Like a traitor did I feel, like a coward  
to leave thee thus to thy Fate! to go away  
to know naught of thy sorrow to leave  
thee unprotected to those who soon  
would suck thy heart's blood!

And Cotroceni! house that I love, house  
that little by little I have modelled to my  
taste, house that knows the voices of my  
children, in whose garden their baby-  
have toddled about. Cotroceni! I left thee  
taking no leave of those who were to re-  
main to protect thee, casting hardly



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a look upon the rooms that once had been  
my pride - I had the courage to smile  
into the face of the old family servant  
who looked at me anxiously as though  
divining that <sup>my</sup> silence hid some awful truth.  
Yes I left thee - and from one, one only  
did I take leave! But that one was so  
small and so silent that never will he  
relate what his mother said to him in  
that hour before her flight!

It was evening - the shadows were <sup>already</sup> ~~about~~  
stealing into the church, and with them I  
<sup>slipped</sup> stole into the sanctuary where a leaf of  
white flowers spread a mystic light, and  
there beside that grave but so recently closed  
I tore from me the mask that all day I  
had worn, and cried out my pain to the  
little one, lying there beneath the stones...

(1)

I confessed to him that I was going - going, not knowing when I would come back. I asked him to forgive me for forsaking him, to forgive his mother for taking the five others with her, whilst she left him lonely, he who was smallest of all! left him to the mercy of those who soon would take possession of the places we had loved!

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As I wept there in solitary despair, it seemed to me that I heard the tread of the approaching armies, and shudderingly I realised that it was the breasts of our soldiers that were forming a rampart around our threatened home! I thought of all those who still must fall before the enemy could reach this sacred door! and with anguish I realised that I would no more be

there to bind up their wounds, to console their defeat . . . .

Perhaps it was so that some vital part of my being should remain in our capital even after our retreat, that I was destined to leave my youngest there beneath the cold slabs of the church. Did perchance God tear him from us as a sign that all this sorrow, all this sacrifice is but a passing horror, that because he lies there awaiting my return, that surely surely I must come back?

When he died, the popular belief was that the Heavens had claimed from me a sacrifice, that God had taken my child from me that in his perfect innocence he should plead for the country he was destined to quit so soon.

To let it be! For I believe in the day of return, I believe in the hour of victory I believe that the blood of our heroes has not been shed in vain!

One day the arms will be opened wide to receive us oh! mother-town. Flags will fly from the windows, the streets will be strewn with branches, and those who return to thy embrace will not know if their hearts are breaking with sorrow or with joy!

It lies in God's hand if I your Queen am to share that solemn hour with you - but this one boon do I ask of my people, that if my feet should not enter the dear city with you, carry all the flowers that you would have given me, to the church where my

(14)  
little one lies, carry them there to his  
grave, heap them in masses above him  
fill the whole church with flowers,  
so that he who so long was lonely  
should have share in your songs of  
praise!

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