

# Coming Home

*Trimble's Horse was a squadron of cavalry raised for the UVF by the then owner of the Impartial Reporter. When the Great War broke out, many of these farmers and tradesmen joined either the Inniskilling Dragoons or the North Irish Horse. Those assigned to the Western Front served in the trenches for most of the War, but in the closing months some rode again.*

## Coming Home

I'm all right now. Really, I know  
the War is over and they'll all  
be coming home.  
So much to do: I wouldn't want  
to have you think I'd let the business go.  
My Baker-man

You looked so grand in 1912  
with Trimble's Horse  
escorting Carson through the Town.  
Lances and banners like the knights of old  
– that's when we fell in love.

To tell the truth, I fell for  
Ragamuffin, black as coal,  
three times the winner at the County Show.  
You loved that horse, I loved that horse  
so – well – you know.

Two years later and you'd gone  
for King and Country Trimble said,  
Join the Dragoons!

I'd never thought to be  
up every morning four o'clock  
lighting the ovens, kneading dough.  
There's no one left I trust to do the work –  
the good men left with you.

Their women used to ask for fadge –  
the way we baked it, for the Front  
"Put them in mind of home."  
But now they all stop talking as I pass.  
The widows mourn.

And Ragamuffin pulled the spring cart till the day  
he broke his leg, caught in the wire.  
I didn't want to, but I wrote to say  
I had to shoot him. You replied  
"Thank God he was not here."

But then I heard the tide had turned –  
the German lines had broke, and you  
Were up again on horseback, riding in pursuit.  
Lances again, and you were at the head!  
I know, I read about that charge.

I tore the paper up to start  
the kindling  
in the morning dark.  
I heard it crackling and recalled it said  
“...against machine guns... men and horses...  
none came back.”

I'm all right now. Really.  
I know the War is over: so before  
I light the ovens I will go again out to the dark  
To listen for his hoofbeats on the street  
when Ragamuffin brings you home.

## Recall

Once we were proud. We rode among  
The best our county had to show  
Blood-bound, we offered up ourselves for Country  
and for King – They brought us low.  
We gave our blood for all that was to come  
And all the past.  
We dug to hide our bodies in the dirt.  
Blind moles, shell-shocked and gassed,

Not only us, but half the world, English and Scots  
Frenchmen and Fenians too – to my surprise  
Clung to the clay like currants in a dough  
Put to the proof, to rise, to face the fire.

But now...

I wish I could recall the men who rode with me  
Because the pain of loss crushes my soul  
The Sergeant grimly staring at the guns  
The madcap Corporal yelling, “Tallyho!”

I wish I could recall the hooves beneath my feet  
Pounding on grass, and stirring up the blood  
Releasing all we'd bound so many years  
Glad to be free at last and doing as we should.

I did not hear the guns begin to speak  
Crackling with fire and burning to the bone;  
The screams of men and horses swept aside,  
A door slammed shut and I was left alone.  
Upon a misty plain beneath a sunless sky

No one to call my name, no one to say, "Well done.  
My good and faithful servant. You have borne it all.  
Now is fulfilled the Covenant you signed in blood."

Nothing at all, except for one  
Lone horse, as black as coal  
"Raggy, old friend! Thank God you're here!  
What of my wife, my home?"

I'm reaching out my hand, for on your brow  
Instead of a white star, a deep black hole  
My fingers go inside and feel the blood  
There – still and pulseless, dark and cold.  
I think, "Is this a dream? I should be waking now."  
But no. I cannot wake until I'm home.

***Jenny Brien***