

Flowers of the Forest

June Tabor

Well how do you do, young Willie McBride,
Do you mind if I sit here down by your graveside
And rest for a while 'neath the warm summer sun
I've been working all day and I'm nearly done.
I see by your gravestone you were only nineteen
When you joined the dead heroes of nineteen-sixteen.
I hope you died well and I hope you died clean
Or Willie McBride, was it slow and obscene.

Chorus :

Did they beat the drum slowly, did they play the fife
lowly,
Did they sound the dead-march as they lowered you down.
Did the bugles play the Last Post and chorus,
Did the pipes play the 'Floors o' the Forest'.
And did you leave a wife or a sweetheart behind
In some faithful heart is your memory enshrined
Although you died back there in nineteen-sixteen
In that faithful heart are you ever nineteen
Or are you a stranger without even a name
Enclosed and forgotten behind the glass frame
In a old photograph, torn and battered and stained
And faded to yellow in a brown leather frame.
The sun now it shines on the green fields of France
The warm summer breeze makes the red poppies dance
And look how the sun shines from under the clouds
There's no gas, no barbed wire, there's no guns firing
now
But here in this graveyard it's still no-man's-land
The countless white crosses stand mute in the sand
To man's blind indifference to his fellow man
To a whole generation that were butchered and damned.
Now young Willie McBride I can't help but wonder why
Do all those who lie here know why they died
And did they believe when they answered the cause
Did they really believe that this war would end wars
Well the sorrow, the suffering, the glory, the pain
The killing and dying was all done in vain
For young Willie McBride it all happened again
And again, and again, and again, and again.