

ORADOUR SUR GLANE

I woke to the smell of new baked bread
From the bakery, down the way,
Mama was singing and feeding the hens,
I had no school today,
Pierre and I had arranged to go
For a ramble, soon or late,
To look for the trilling skylark's nest,
And the hedgehog's rolling gait.

Papa was sat in the garden, he
Was fixing my sister's bike,
While Grandpa sat on the old wood bench,
Filling his gnarled old pipe,
The sun was set in a pale blue sky
And the lord smiled down on the town,
The war was a million miles away
From Oradour-sur-Glane.

Pierre was waiting across the street,
We ran with a whoop of joy,
'I'll race you out to the barley field, '
He said, my cousin's boy.
We found a hollow within the crop
Lay there in the broad sunlight,
And watched the birds as they swooped on down
From their laughing, joyous flight!

At two o'clock, we heard the clatter
Of many an Army truck,
They drove to surround the village fields,
There were twenty, near enough.
Then soldiers leapt from the canopies,
Their uniforms were black,
An SS sign on their collars, and
A skull on each forage cap!

They herded the workers into the town,
We lay in a funk, and hid,
We heard the guttural, sharp commands,
They did as the soldiers bid,
A woman ran in a terror then,
A shot rang out and she fell,

Pierre stood up, as he ran he cried:
'That was my aunt Giselle! '

I said: 'Come back! ' but he ran towards
The centre of the town,
A shot rang out as he scaled the fence,
Pierre went tumbling down!
I knew at once that my friend was dead,
I held my breath, and wept,
And burrowed deep in the barley field,
I see his body yet!

They marched the men en masse along
To Madame Laudy's barn,
They led the women and children
To the church, in their alarm!
They took the babies, pushers too,
Crammed deep inside the church,
But then the SS opened fire,
And they lit a blazing torch.

The men, they were slaughtered in the barn,
They never told them why,
The barn went up in flames as well,
I lay in the field, and cried,
I lost my mother and sister too,
My father and my gran,
The Devil smiled on his work that day
In Oradour-sur Glane!

They burnt the town, burnt every home,
They turned the town to hell,
I wonder whether the soldiers wept
When they went down, as well;
For off the coast, at Normandy
Was an Army with a plan,
To slay the butchers that killed the town

Of Oradour-sur-Glane!

David Lewis Paget