

THE PARADE

I step in line, my place is here,
With cries behind, I do not turn,
I look ahead and join the flow,
and follow where the others go,

This is the way, it is my time,
To give up plans, and hopes that yearn,
To turn away from daily strife,
And from the chores of human life,

In ranks in front, my mother's head,
And further still, my father's, too,
But person's near, I do not know,
As strangers all, we nod and go,

I shuffle on with rank and file,
Naught but silence for this while,
No haste nor stopping, in the throng,
In timelessness we march along,

A cold sun shines on endless plain,
And windless air bears on my face,
We walk our walk, and keep our peace,
But wonder when our march will cease,

A shout is raised, "No! No! not yet!",
A child then steps into the line,
Not yet, not yet, too soon, too soon,
To join that terrible platoon,

And yet, 'tis done, the child is here,
Its rank and file defined, and clear,
Nor shouts or cries will turn it out,
Nor any grasp reach ever near,

The line streams endlessly in front,
Beginning, nowhere scars the plain,
I stretched to see, but vainly look,
Turn down, and follow on again,

The ranks are wide, the files are long,
They reach ahead on hill and plain,
They disappear away in front,
In mist and haze, they fade – are gone,

It worries not where we may go,
With no more endless to and fro,
We wander on, each in our place,
No hurry now, we've won our race,

The silent partners in my rank,
Look blankly forward with no smile,

Unknown; unknowing; they keep their place,
Within their shells, they hide their face,

I know ahead walk parents – more,
Forebears unknown lead on in time,
Oh, which heads distant there are mine?
How did they live? - corrupt? - divine?

Now finally, I must look back,
I see a friend, my wife, a child,
They silently advanced in step,
They too, are by the march beguiled,

I wave and shout to catch their glance,
It does no good, they notice not,
My soundless voice disturbs no ear,
My wave is lost in shimmering air,

I turn again to tasks at hand,
To walk, to keep my place in line,
To follow on, I know not where,
To have no hope, or fear, or care,

The distance comes more misty still,
The ranks in front now fade from view,
As though they enter clouds of dust,
Or fog, or vapor, damp and chill,

Still side by side we march along,
But more and more becomes a dream,
The mists close in, I cannot see,
But dimly sense them next to me,

More pale, more thin, the view becomes,
Just smoke and shadows are we now,
And naught pervades the empty air,
Except my feeling that I'm there,

In time, this too will fade away,
No more will eye the view discern,
But only whispers in the mist,
Will hint at life, and living's turn.

John Boenke
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