

NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN

She came to see me off,
Tears flowing on her innocent face,
Powerless to prevent departure,
Whistle sounding a last post,
Never to be seen again.

Steam train pulls away,
I view her porcelain face for the final time,
She is dignified and graceful,
Waving, her hand parallel to her face,
Never to be seen again.

Summer days of golden meadows,
Green hills with weeping willows by streams,
Left behind and replaced
By trench stench, squalor and rage,
Never to be seen again.

The eve is over and day has dawned,
All is calm,
Memories lost forever,
Goodbye.
Never to be seen again.

Author's note:

There is a scene in 'Scott of the Antarctic' (Film: 1948) where Captain Scott's Expedition sets sail for the Antarctic. The year is 1910. On the quayside, the crew's wives, families and well-wishers wave them off. In the crowd is Oriana, the wife of Edward Wilson – they had married some three weeks before the Discovery Expedition to the Antarctic in 1901. The film captures the solemn moment of departure in 1910 brilliantly.

I pictured the same scene for those brave souls, never to be seen again, who went to war between August 1914 and November 1918.

The poem was written in November 1999.