The Last Laugh

By Wilfred Owen

‘O Jesus Christ! I’m hit,’ he said; and died.
Whether he vainly cursed or prayed indeed,
   The Bullets chirped—In vain, vain, vain!
   Machine-guns chuckled—Tut-tut! Tut-tut!
   And the Big Gun guffawed.

Another sighed,—‘O Mother,—mother,—Dad!’
Then smiled at nothing, childlike, being dead.
   And the lofty Shrapnel-cloud
   Leisurly gestured,—Fool!
   And the splinters spat, and tittered.

‘My Love!’ one moaned. Love-languid seemed his mood,
Till slowly lowered, his whole face kissed the mud.
   And the Bayonets’ long teeth grinned;
   Rabbles of Shells hooted and groaned;
   And the Gas hissed.

Notes:

POL Participants: several changes to punctuation have been changed, and the line "And the falling splinters tittered" was changed to "And the splinters spat, and tittered", in June 2014.


Wilfred Owen spent much of his short, adult life as a volunteer soldier for the British military during World War I. He wrote vivid and terrifying poems about modern warfare. Owen was killed by machine gun fire just days before the end of the war.