"Forty Years On"

1872

Forty years on, when afar and asunder,
Parted are those who are singing today,
When you look back and forgetfully wonder,
What you were like in your work and your play,
Then it may be, there will often come o'er you,
Glimpses of notes like the catch of a song,
Visions of boyhood shall float them before you,
Echoes of dreamland shall bear them along.

Follow up, follow up, follow up, follow up, follow up,
'til the field ring again and again,
With the tramp of the twenty two men,
Follow up, follow up.

Routs and discomfitures, rushes and rallies,
Bases attempted and rescued and won,
Strife without anger and art without malice,
How will it seem to you, forty years on?
Then you will say, not a feverish minute,
Strained the weak heart and the wavering knee,
Never the battle raged, hottest but in it,
Neither the last nor the faintest were we.

Follow up, follow up etc.

O the great days in the distance enchanted,
Days of fresh air, in the rain and the sun,
How we rejoiced as we struggled and panted,
Hardly believable forty years on!
How we discoursed with them, one with another,
Auguring triumph or balancing fate,
Loved the ally with the heart of a brother,
Hated the foe with a playing at hate!

Follow up, follow up etc.

Forty years on, growing older and older,
Shorter in wind, as in memory long,
Feeble of foot and rheumatic of shoulder,
What will it help you, that once you were strong?
God give us bases to guard our beleaguer,
Games to play out, whether earnest or fun,
Fights for the fearless and goals for the eager
Twenty and thirty and forty years on.

Follow up, follow up etc.