Rocca San Giovanni

It is quiet here now, the valley is silent.

Only the birds and the stream have their noise,

The twittering, bubbling sweet sounds of nature.

Apart from this – silence which nothing destroys.

The smell is a faint one of morning and pine trees,

Of bracken and water, of woodland and stream,

The sight is of rushes, of mill house and lime trees.

The feel is of peacefulness sweet as a dream.

But at one time this valley, this valley of heaven,

Became a most torturous valley of hell.

For the fighting was bitter, the Hun held on grimly,

Regardless of losses, and many men fell.

For the British came north and the silence was shattered,

By rifle – machine gun – trench mortar – grenade.

The Messerschmitt diving bought sickening terror,

The valley vibrated with Death’s serenade.

But the British advanced and the valley was taken,

The fighting moved northward as Gerry moved back,

And the only remains to give proof of the fighting,

Are freshly dug graves at the side of the track.

Again it is peaceful, the valley is silent,

Only the birds and the stream have their noise,

The twittering, bubbling sounds of nature.

Apart from this – silence which nothing destroys.

George Fraser Gallie, November, 1943.