

The Ancient Way

“Accept, O God,” said Abraham.
“My son instead of ram or lamb.
At Thy command I’ve brought my knife
To sacrifice young Isaac’s life.”
God smiled. “’Tis well, good Abraham!
But this time I will take the ram.”

In many a kindlier era since,
This tale has made boys’s fathers wince . . .
Yet when the God of War feels gory,
Even today, do fathers falter?
No — like old Abraham in the story
They lay their sons upon the altar.

Clarence Day, *After All*, 1936, Alfred A. Knopf