



Wounded Runner

By Marcus Lander (September 2009)

*The day dawned clear, the weather fine:
A winter morning, bright and fair.
I hurried to the starting line
And joined the crowd assembled there.*

*The whistle blew and off we sped,
All eager for the race ahead;
It was a joy to be alive,
As for our goal, we all did strive.*

*The pace was quick but not too tough
And though the ground had not yet thawed
And oft the way was steep and rough
Yet these were trials I could afford.*

*I ventured on with untired limbs:
I felt as though on eagles wings
The miles sped past, no cares had I
All seemed easy, no need to try.*

*Many a runner I overtook
As through the brush and underwood
Up stoney banks and over brooks
I picked my way as best I could.*

*Yet on one steep and sheer descent
I landed badly, down I went,
Undaunted yet I rose again
But found I had sustained a sprain.*

*I hobbled on, my ankle sore
I thought that I would run it off
But soon I could endure no more
I had to stop, though some might scoff.*

*Uncertain now what I should do
I stood to rest and think things through,
For though all hope was not yet gone
I knew not how to carry on.*

*I liked to think that I was made
Of sterner stuff than those who quit;
But now by fate, I'd been betrayed,
Which curbed my former pride a bit.*

*And as I stood there undecided
There passed the ones I had derided
For their slow and ambling pace
Which seemed unsuited for the race.*



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*As time went by, the pain grew less
And gingerly I started on;
My pace was slow, I must confess
And all my confidence was gone.*

*But every step stings like a knife
And all the former joys of life
Seem dim and distant to my mind
As on I labour - far behind.*

*Much meaner athletes pass me by
A lesson in humility
For now, I now what 'tis to try
Impaired by disability.*

*My throbbing ankle burns like fire
At every step, the pain is dire
And ever slacker grows my pace
But I refuse to quit the race.*

*Though crippled now, my speed is least
I must not let myself despair
For many a slow and lumbering beast
Outstrips the slumbering hare.*

*Not to the swift the race may be
Nor to the strong, the victory
For some who start out strong and fleet
In time to come may face defeat*

*My aching limbs for mercy cry
Temptation bids me rest awhile
Doubt questions why I even try
And mocks each slow and painful mile.*

*But though I know, I may not win
Yet still my heart shall not give in,
Nor to these hopeless thoughts shall yield
Nor without honour quit the field.*