

DAVID RACHEL

## The Death of John Pendlebury

It's safer to go forward than retreat,  
better face danger than take flight;  
to leap, and then land lightly on the feet.

I told the General, if you arm the men of Crete,  
no Nazi thug will see tomorrow's light;  
it's safer to go forward than retreat.

Honour required of every young athlete  
who faced the charging bull, to stand upright,  
to leap, and then land lightly on the feet.

Go to the tavernas, go out and meet  
old men who fought the Turks, who know in any fight  
it's safer to go forward than retreat.

I'll not live now to see this sad defeat  
by Hitler Youth prepared by day or night  
to leap, and then land lightly on the feet.

I shot three paratroopers in the street,  
but now against this wall my blood runs bright.  
It's safer to go forward than retreat.  
I'll leap, and then land lightly on my feet.

John Pendlebury, chief archaeologist at Knossos, also served in Military Intelligence until his death in the invasion of Crete in 1941.