

To Thomas D. Amory

26th U. S. Infantry

*John F. M. Case 1916. Medal in action Montcheny, May 24, 1918
Awarded D.S.C., and cited for "Medal of Honor".*

Killed In Action October 2nd, 1918, La Forge Herme, France

I.

I see again that chill September morning,
The dripping leafless trees, the wan thin dawn,
The rain-drenched troops, full spent with night long marching,
The sodden corpse of earth, all spirit gone.

Behind us somewhere down the wind-swept valley
The foundered kitchens must be guided through;
Mine was the task, but you, fatigued and weary
Must laugh fatigue away and share it too.

Silent we walked, till dimly seen, mist-shrouded
We passed a little town and on the air
Came indistinct the mournful muffled tolling
That called men of your simple faith to prayer.

What clear clean thoughts were in your mind that moment?
What hope of peace attained and struggle done?
What picture formed of rest and home and sunlight?
What soldier's dream of laurels bravely won?

Then down the path behind us came the chaplain,
The soldier priest, and drawing you away
He spoke low-voiced about the morrow's danger
And said "Come make your peace with God today."

I see again your tired face torn with struggle
Again your eyes seek mine, and mine grow dim,
As firm and low I hear your spirit's answer
"No thanks—I think I'll take my chance with him."

Brave friend that scorned to give your soul a vantage
When both of us kept rendezvous with death;
I gave no sign that I had seen your struggle,
No single word of thanks was on my breath.

I gave no sign that I had seen your struggle
As silently again we went along,
But stealing through the clouds of mist about us
Ah Lad, I swear there rang a golden song!

II.

Again the wearied dawn is torn with battle,
The mists are rent with vicious blades of flame,
And your young slenderness I see before me
Laughing a jest and calling out my name.

A waving hand "Twin-beds," you cry "at Neuilly,"
Then as you pass into the mists again,
"Medals pinned on me this time," floating gaily
Comes back your laugh, and "Kaiser count your men!"

'Twas I who brought the order up that dawning
And as it had been written large in flame
I knew "Let him who leads here be your finest"
Spelled out the very letters of your name.

Gladly you went, but heavy, leaden heavy
Each minute on my heart, and every breath
Was bitter hot with burning pain and anguish,
A soldier knew your guerdon there was death.

Then piercing through the mists, the devil's dance tune,
Shrill and staccato notes of frenzied fear,
The scream of pulsing gun when on the trigger
The clutching hand feels certain death creep near.

Then silence, save the crashing roaring rumble
That never stills. Till from the mist there strayed
A reeling soldier blind, blood-soaked and sobbing
"Oh God, they got the best man ever made."

Dear laughing lad, next day amid the havoc!
That witnessed the brave fight you made alone,
I came upon your slender fallen figure
Lips smiling though they pressed against Death's own.

I came upon your slender fallen figure
At dawn upon that barren war-scarred lea.
We stormed and held the heights you marked that morning,
But O to hold the heights you marked for me!