

made them just that *way*—you know—if you hadn't been to Paris. You understand what I mean? They're so *different* over there. Don't you think?"

Miss Eva handed the two hats carefully to Roberta, then turned and gave her customer a long speculative look. After all, why be bitter? She had spiked Mrs. Germont's guns forever. She had won a victory out of her strange defeat, for she was wise enough to

count knowledge gained by experience a proud asset. "Yes," she said at last, "I learned a lot of things—in Paris. They are different; yes, indeedy. And the French touch—" she winced. She remembered—then with a glint of humor she chose her words that they might tell the truth to herself yet reveal nothing to her hearer. "About the French touch—well—I'll say you got to see it working with your own eyes before you appreciate it *right*."

## GARDENS

LAURENCE MCKINNEY

I want not a garden where people pass  
 With measuring look and censoring eye  
 And know each time I have cut the grass  
 And where I have planted things, and why.  
 Where the windows look, with the shades half drawn,  
 Like tired eyes on a dull parade,  
 On the well pressed sod of an empty lawn  
 And the lonesome cool of the maples' shade.

Give me a garden behind a wall  
 Where sentinel hollyhocks guard the way,  
 Where never the world comes in at all  
 Or the clangorous noise of a man-made day;  
 Where every casement frames a scene  
 That the hand of God has painted free,  
 And faerie fancies dance between  
 The flowers for only my heart and me.

# LOVE, ARMS, SONG, AND DEATH

*Alan Seeger Dared Live Without Compromise*

HENRY MORTON ROBINSON

UNLIKE Shelley and Sidney, the two poets he resembled most, Alan Seeger wrote no formal defense of poetry. His life, dedicated to his "three idols, Love and Arms and Song," was the only apology he made for the poetry in the world. He was Beauty's celebrant, and, living only to serve her, had a haughty disdain and scorn of lower things. The ordinary pitch of life was not attuned to the intense vibration of his spirit; of necessity he sought the quickening impulses of love and war. His passionate ideal nature demanded an epic existence, and he found his epos in a heroic death and a few exalted poems.

Seeger's career offers the rare example of one who dared live bravely and without compromise. To the self-imposed law of beauty he was faithful to the last. No dumb acquiescence to outward pressure, no final surrender; his early and heroic death prevented that. Seeger cared nothing for the little loves that blunt the edge of sensibility and pall the strange wonder which is the poet's only care to preserve intact. Wrapped in a Byronic cloak, haughty as Mephisto, he stood arrogantly aloof, steadily refusing to implicate himself in the crawling affairs of business and convention. And so,

until the time of his enlistment in the Foreign Legion in 1914, he was a failure before men's eyes, having accomplished nothing they could measure by the thumb-rule of success.

Many people did not like Alan Seeger. Those who did not know him well frankly disliked him, called him a poseur and an esthete, said he was conceited, exquisite. It was bound to be so. He was in the world, but *of* it, never. The same poetic quickening that intensified its beauty also magnified its sordid seaminess. And had not the opportunity of a glorious sacrifice come to him, Alan Seeger would have inevitably sunk, perhaps like Ernest Dowson, into miserable exhaustion or galling compromise. He was geared, not to the cog-wheels of commerce or the treadmill of professional life, but to the larger mechanism of a universe of which he felt himself to be a small but perfectly integrated particle. For with all his aloofness and contempt of the world, Seeger knew better than most others what made it move, and to move in alignment with its macrocosmic laws was the aim and happiness of his life.

The details of Alan Seeger's brief career and gallant death have only been partly told, but the main

outlines of his life are fairly well fixed. He was born in New York on June 22, 1888. Both his parents are still living. His father, Charles Louis Seeger, is one of the empire-builders of modern commerce, for he was responsible for the development of the huge rubber resources of Mexico. His mother before her marriage was Elsie Adams, a member of an old and distinguished New England family.

When Alan was a year old his parents moved to Staten Island and took a house overlooking the mouth of New York Harbor. It was here, at the gateway of the Occident bustling with shipping to and from the great ports of the world, that Alan spent the first ten years of his life, growing up between a brother older and a sister younger than himself. It was here that he watched for hours the navies of the world passing in review; the great outgoing liners sunk to their water-lines with cargoes, the waspish tugs darting to and fro amid the glamorous pageantry of maritime commerce. The spectacle could not fail to stimulate Alan's eager imagination, and coming home he would draw upon the walls of his nursery crude representations of the great vessels with their smoking funnels, gaunt masts, and tangled cordage.

When Alan was ten years old his family moved to New York City, where Alan attended the Horace Mann School until he was twelve. At this age it was his delight to chase the clanging fire-engines as they dashed along the New York streets, and even in manhood he could not resist the lure of the fire-alarm. A three-horse fire-engine in

full career was one of the few things that had power to charm him during the later unhappy days in New York. Here was excitement, violent and immediate. No matter where he was or what he was doing, Seeger would throw up the window when the fire-engines rolled past, and hang over the sill until they disappeared.

Thus far his childhood had been without a strongly determining influence, but in 1900 Mr. Seeger's business took the family to Mexico, where Alan was to spend the next four years of his life, years particularly susceptible to impressions that were to contribute largely to his development. It was from those early years in Mexico, supplemented by the long vacations of his Harvard days, that Seeger's poetry probably derived its rich pictorial quality, bright with the colorful profusion of semi-tropical foliage. Mr. William Archer says, "Assuredly it was a fortunate chance that took this lover of sunlight and space and splendor in his most receptive years to regions where they superabound." No one will deny after reading Seeger's poetry that this early Mexican influence was extensive and profound. Alan himself realized this. Next to Paris, he probably loved Mexico better than any place on earth, and from letters written to his father it seems that he seriously considered returning there after the war.

Between 1904 and 1906 Alan prepared for college at the Hackley School at Tarrytown, magnificently situated on the grassy cliffs overlooking the Hudson. A vacation among the New Hampshire hills and a winter in California brought

him into contact with new scenes of extraordinary loveliness and considerably strengthened his rather delicate constitution. At school Seeger suffered not a little because of his inability to excel in sports, but he made up in pluck and perseverance what he lacked in strength. He rode well, and at all times during his life was an indefatigable walker. As a boy he made long excursions into the country surrounding Mexico City, and while at college he went on frequent walking tours, often outdistancing companions apparently stronger than himself.

From the Hackley School Seeger went on to Harvard College, matriculating with the freshman class of 1906. Here Seeger passed through the alternate phases of loathing and loving the whole thing. Speaking of his enthusiastic second stage, his mother says, "he was in perfect despair over having wasted the years, and not entering into the life there." Alan himself, writing in the last days of his life, gives an illuminating glimpse of his first years at college. "As you may remember," he writes to a friend, "in the years when I was at College I was a devotee of Learning for Learning's sake. My life during those years was intellectual to the exclusion of everything else. The events of that life were positive adventures to me. Few, I am sure, have known more than I did the employ of the intellect as an instrument of pleasure. I shut myself off completely from the life of the University, so full, nevertheless, of pleasures. I scoffed at these pleasures, that were no more to me than froth. I felt no need of comradeship. I led the life of an anchorite. At an age when the

social instincts are usually most lively I came to understand the pleasures of solitude. My books were my friends. The opening to me of the shelves of the library—a rare privilege—was like opening the gates of an earthly paradise. In those dark alleys I would spend afternoons entire, browsing among old folios, following lines of research that often had no connection with my courses, following them simply for the pleasure of the explorer discovering new countries. I never regret those years. They made their contribution. Their desires were simple and all the means of satisfying them were at hand."

His own account of his life at Harvard accords perfectly with the reminiscences of his friends. He is reported to have had "a somewhat exotic appearance, due to picturesque clothing and a conspicuous mat or thatch of black hair." A contemporary, recalling a meeting of a literary club at Harvard, says: "Alan sat through the entire evening in absolute silence, hardly deigning as much as a reply to questions directed at him. After the meeting, on being questioned as to his extraordinary behavior, he announced with perfect naturalness that the conversation had not appealed to him, and added 'that by temperament he was not interested in trivial talk.'" Certainly no man was ever more wary of petty enthusiasms than Alan Seeger. He would not talk unless he was passionately aroused. He said what he thought, and if he had nothing to say he was silent. But when he did talk, he spoke with enthusiasm and energy, even though his ideas might not be

strikingly original. A Harvard faculty member of that time says of him: "Many persons found him almost morbidly indifferent and unresponsive, and he seldom showed the full measure of his powers. . . . I grew to have a strong liking for him personally, as well as a respect for his intellectual powers. But I should never have expected him to show the robustness of either mind or body that we now know him to have possessed. He was frail and sickly in appearance, and seemed to have a temperament in keeping with his physique. It took a strong impulse to bring him out and disclose his real capacity."

During his senior year Seeger became one of the editors of the "Harvard Monthly." Kenneth Macgowan, a class behind Seeger, and Walter Lippmann were also members of the staff. During the year Alan contributed ten poems to the "Monthly," of which three ("Tezcoztzinco," "Broceliande," and a translation from Dante) are included in his published work. If Seeger had written nothing else, or nothing better than this college verse, he would scarcely be entitled to consideration even as a minor poet. The work of his college days is not particularly striking except in its surprisingly wide range of themes, drawn from Greek, medieval, Gaelic, and Romantic sources. Its dominant note is a vaguely anonymous cry for beauty, reiterated in more than one singing line and felicitous phrase. Great technical facility and a fine sensitiveness are clearly evident, but at best the college verse is only the prelude to the grander and more exalted poetry that he was

to write up to the very day of his death.

With the completion of his college years Seeger began to feel the stirrings of new and stronger passions that the quiet intellectualism of university life could not satisfy. It was an inevitable phase in the development of the poet. Life broke over him in a great and glorious wave of romance; the serene academic spell was broken, the charm dissolved, and from that time forth he was haunted by an image of happiness that seemed forever to elude him and destroyed irremediably "the peace of mind and power of concentration so essential to the intellectual life." Henceforward the emotional rather than the rational faculty was to be his clue in beauty's maze. So, "obsessed with a burning vision of Happiness, he left the quiet groves of the Academy and went down into the city in search of it."

Seeger came to New York in 1910 and for two years lived an apparently futile and purposeless life, writing but little, vainly seeking the romantic stimulus he was never to find in his own country; he fell upon the thorns of life in the very city toward which he had looked so hopefully. He seemed to be interested in nothing except criticizing the United States, its people and its art, and was well on his way to becoming a complete dilettante. He refused to settle down to a job in a newspaper office. Mr. Archer Huntington gave him a place in the Hispanic Museum, but the attendant routine galled him, and he left after a few weeks. He was too proud to try hack writing and could never bring himself to

submit his poetry to the criticism and possible rejection of magazine editors, whose standards he despised. At this time he affected the pallid estheticism of the nineties, a pose which at no time was part of his real nature, and which he afterward discarded entirely.

During 1911-12 Seeger virtually isolated himself in a small attic room at 61 Washington Square. The old house, which now bears a plate testifying to the world that Alan Seeger, poet and soldier, once lived there, can claim its full share of American literary history and tradition. Frank Norris wrote most of "The Octopus" there. Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, and O. Henry have lived there in times past. Seeger's poor cramped attic, low-ceilinged and half-windowed, looked out on a courtyard cluttered with ash-cans and clothes-lines. It was in such a room that the young poet fresh from a sheltered campus records his first reactions to the ugliness of New York. The first four sonnets of the sequence beginning,

"Down the strait vistas where a city street,"

are a spiritual chronicle of the year intervening between Harvard and Washington Square, and were written during the ebb-tide of Seeger's early disillusionment. Quite probably the roots of his fatalism are traceable to this perception of the shocking disparity between his romantic idealization of life and the bleak reality of life as he found it. The young poet already knew after a single year of disillusionment that the workaday world moved to a

dreary tempo altogether unsuited to the beamy rapid motions of his own soul. A letter written at this time to a college official with whom Seeger was on terms of friendship contains a startlingly prophetic sentence, the first of those fatalistic utterances that were to become so frequent in Seeger's later poetry and letters. It was something more than mere affectation that caused Seeger to write, "My only salvation will be to die young, and to leave some monument, which being, if such a thing is possible, more beautiful than the life it commemorates, may seem to posterity an only and an adequate excuse for that life having been."

Walter Adolphe Roberts has recorded some impressions of the poet at this time that may fill out the portrait I am attempting to sketch. Mr. Roberts says: "I first met Seeger in 1911, in a little French table d'hôte kept by three Breton sisters named Petitpas. He was then twenty-three years old, and as handsome as a child of the sun. His complexion was of a singularly luminous brunette tinge, and at that time he affected closely cropped side-whiskers extending about three-fourths of the way down in front of his ears. He usually wore a soft shirt and scarlet tie which harmonized with his warm complexion. Alan attracted the attention of John Butler Yeats, father of the Irish national poet, who foretold that Seeger would do good things in literature."

That summer Seeger spent a month at the MacDowell Memorial Colony at Peterboro, New Hampshire. Edwin Carty Ranck tells the following anecdote indicative of Seeger's haughty and aristocratic bear-

ing toward the rest of mankind: "The Colony was crowded and the beds were scarce. Seeger came to me rather peremptorily one night and informed me that he had been directed to sleep on a sofa in the annex. He said he detested sofas, and wanted to know if I would not give up my bed to him. I told him to go to the devil, quite good-naturedly. He took himself off with imperturbable *sang froid* and slept on some clean straw in a near-by stable."

It had become clear to Seeger that American morals and modes of living were wholly uncongenial to him, and he believed that the life he craved was awaiting him in Europe. In the autumn of 1912 Alan Seeger left New York, never to return, and sailed for Paris without plans, prospects, or a great deal of money. The move was both fortunate and fatal. Paris was the spark that ignited Seeger's magazines of poetry, yet it must also be remembered that it was gratitude to Paris that sent him charging to his death in the Battle of the Somme. But between 1912 and 1916 were four passionate years during which Seeger, completely enamoured of youth and poetry, plunged into the *vie de Bohème* of Paris. He took lodgings at 17 Rue du Sommerard, near the Musée de Cluny, and chose for his intimates the artists and the students of the Latin Quarter.

Paris held him for a while in utter thralldom. Again he began to write poetry, destroying more than he preserved. Love and Paris were the only themes he knew during his first two years in France. No one, I believe, has ever so completely captured the spirit of the great capital

in a few poems. Seeger loved Paris in all her aspects—the midday gloom of some obscure quarter, the green lights lessening in the west, the boulevard tables screened with box and bay trees. The shapes and sounds of Paris life came to him through all his senses, palpitating with eagerness to feel, hear, and see beauty in all its forms. Yet the city did not claim him wholly, for during the summer months he made long tramping excursions through the provinces that later he was to defend.

In Paris, Seeger matured rapidly, undergoing a tempering that was to change him from the young esthete of New York to the hardy and virile soldier of the Foreign Legion. No scrutiny of the merely external facts of his life can account for this change. Outwardly he lived the care-free life of the Quarter, writing, loving, dreaming. But both in his life and his poetry a strange chemistry is at work, slowly precipitating the turbulent stream of his life. Externally the metamorphosis is seen in his dress, his manner, and his choice of companions. A quiet and manly conservatism begins to supplant the more exquisite pose of his youth, and it was this development as much as anything else that led to Alan's complete reconciliation with his father in July, 1914. Father and son spent a few pleasant days at Canterbury, days of such intimacy as they had not enjoyed since Alan was a boy.

Seeger had altered. He had grown sterner in his resolution to serve beauty even more faithfully than before. And we realize that he had undergone a complete spiritual revo-

lution when he wrote to his *marraine*, a month before his death, "The noticeable young man you describe as having seen at Lavenue's was probably myself, for it was my pleasure in those days to be noticeable just as now it is an even greater satisfaction to merge into the whole, feeling myself the smallest cog in the mighty machinery that is grinding out the future of the world, whatever that is to be." If a clear vision of one's relation to the universe is humility, the Alan Seeger of the Foreign Legion was one of the humblest men that ever lived.

After a year in Paris Seeger was vaguely suspecting what we now know to be a fact, that only the catalysis of war could wholly clarify the perturbation of his spirit and give him the stimulus necessary for the expression of the great poetry surging within him. His life thus far had been divided between service to love and song. Hitherto they had satisfied him, but now the nostalgia for war begins to oppress him, and a desire for the fierce and heroic exertion of battle sears the very fabric of his poetry. War was the logical, the ultimate stage in Seeger's development as a man and a poet. In 1911 he had considered leaping into the Balkan cockpit as Byron had done a hundred years earlier. But Seeger's patriotism glowed brightest for France, and was to be the final factor in his decision to bear arms in her defense.

His battle ardor breaks into a major key in much of the poetry written at this time. In the poem beginning, "Do you remember Paris of glad faces?" he has a swift and certain presentiment of his death on

the battle-field. Even while he gazes on the face of love, he cries:

"Dear face, when courted Death  
shall claim my limbs and find  
them

Laid in some desert place, alone or  
where the tides

Of war's tumultuous waves on the  
wet sands behind them

Leave rifts of gasping life when  
their red flood subsides . . ."

His old restlessness, quiescent for a time, is reasserting itself, more poignantly, more irresistibly than before. Seeger probably realized that if he lived long enough life would compromise him, slay him utterly; a thing that death could never do. So when the fuse of war began to crackle, and the opportunity for which he had longed was at hand, he hesitated not a moment. Prompted by a generous gratitude to France, urged by his passion for experience, and obeying the cosmic necessity that underlay his fatalism, Alan Seeger enlisted in the Foreign Legion as a common infantryman scarcely three weeks after the outbreak of the war.

He was under no illusion that he was fighting a "war to end war." The same faith that made him surrender to the impulse of normal living and of love, forced him now to make of himself the instrument through which a greater force might work out its inscrutable ends through the impulses of terror and compulsion. He wished only to move in harmony with a universe whose masses are in continual conflict. Believing that wars are the "birth-pangs of new eras," he thought them as natural as childbirth and as justifiable. In his first letter written

from the training camp at Toulouse he states his position quite clearly: "In this universe strife and sternness play as big a part as love and tenderness, and cannot be shirked by one whose will it is to rule his life in accordance with the cosmic forces he sees in play about him."

The story of Alan Seeger's twenty-two months of service on the northern and western battle-fronts has been told once and for all in his "Letters and Diary," written in the first-line trenches under heartbreaking conditions of vermin, mud, and dysentery. Seeger's first high enthusiasm never waned. Even in the presence of carrion and decaying death his love of war did not desert him. His fierce energy and bravery are unbelievable. In the battles of the Marne and Champagne he volunteered for all the most dangerous reconnoitering, wrote poems in the trenches by night, and poured out his whole being in a flood of longing for the hour of sacrifice. Poetry and romance are not easy to find in modern warfare. But by his words, his actions, and his glorious death in the bayonet-charge of Belloy-en-Santerre Alan Seeger showed that man's joy of battle was not wholly extinguished at Roncesvalles, that the romance of war did not utterly perish with Sir Philip Sidney.

Yet for all his intense bravery Seeger was unpopular in the Foreign Legion. At one time plans were considered for dealing with this haughty young gentleman who was in the habit of withdrawing to a corner to write, and who refused to fraternize with his fellow *légionnaires*. The regiment appointed a commit-

tee to order Seeger to apply for a transfer. When the committee approached Seeger with the ultimatum he answered scornfully: "I never alter my course because I am threatened or disliked. My reason for being here is to serve France. For me, the men who sent you simply do not exist." Considering the fact that the Foreign Legion is composed of the world's choicest ruffians, a rare quick-on-the-trigger crew who would not hesitate to dispose summarily of any one who opposed them, Seeger's attitude is seen to be one of supreme courage. By his answer he created a new respect for himself in the Legion. Thereafter he was better understood, and after proving by repeated acts of bravery that he was utterly fearless he became more popular among his comrades. Sergeant Morlae, a rigid disciplinarian who trained Seeger, praises him as a soldier on the march and under fire. Alan's feeling toward the Legion is shown by his action a few months later. When the French government extended to all *légionnaires* the privilege of entering regular French regiments Seeger remained loyal to the Legion (where the danger was much greater), saying, "I am content here, and have good comrades."

After seven months of comparative inactivity on the Aisne, Seeger's regiment was transferred to Champagne, where he took part in the tremendous struggle of 1915. The Battle of Champagne lasted a month, and Seeger's eagerness for action passes all understanding. He courts destruction with "taunts and invitations," by creeping up to the German barbed wire in broad daylight and leaving a card bearing his

name. He aspires to win the Croix de Guerre by bringing in some "live prisoners." While he is held in reserve he makes daily jottings in his diary, expressing the hope that he will soon get into action. When Joffre orders the Legion to advance, Seeger exclaims: "I thrill at the prospect of being in the thick of it. The German positions are to be overwhelmed with a hurricane of artillery fire, and great assaults will be delivered all along the line. It will be a battle without precedent in history." Knowing that he is going over the top in the first wave of an infantry-charge he says: "I have been waiting for this moment for more than a year. It will be the greatest moment of my life. I shall take good care to live up to it." The next day he went into battle in an effort to pierce the German line and liberate the invaded country.

He returned, scratched, and envying his friends who were more seriously wounded. Seeger's day had not yet come, but with an ever-deepening fatalism he prophesied his own glorious end on the battle-field. One of his comrades says: "Alan unceasingly reiterated his presentiment that he would be killed in battle. We used to try to stop him, but it was no use. He felt absolutely sure that he would die in action." To Seeger this seemed the noblest, the only way to die, and his sole fear was that he should expire in some inglorious fashion, killed off by a skulking sniper in some petty raid. In a letter to his mother he briefly summarizes his attitude toward the supreme sacrifice he was so eager to make: "Death is nothing terrible after all. It may mean

something more wonderful than life. It cannot possibly mean anything worse to the good soldier."

To be a "good soldier" of the Legion was the height of Seeger's ambition. He achieved his end after driving his frail body through a grueling physical ordeal, and before he fell in action he was regarded as one of the best soldiers in a corps of fighting men.

Amid the clangor and turmoil of battle Seeger wrote his best poetry, breaking completely with the classic tradition that had influenced his earlier work. His war poetry is lyrical, unique, passionately his own. It is big with the beauty of eternal things—glory, conflict, love, and death. Such poems as "The Aisne" and "Champagne 1914-15" pulsate with the very beating of the poet's heart which feels

"That kinship with the stars that  
only War

Is great enough to lift man's spirit  
to."

In "The Hosts" he salutes his comrades who are moved to fight and die

"By the powers that force  
The sea forever to ebb and rise,  
That hold Arcturus in his course."

Perfectly happy for the first time in his life, the poet thrilled with the sense of his life's blood flowing close to the heart of a cosmic entity of which he felt himself a part. Seeger always thought of war as a drama of destiny, and he was proud to be both actor and spectator of that drama.

In "Maktoob" (which is the Turkish for "It is written") Seeger

acknowledged the power of a fate from which there is no escape, and after complete submission to the will of this Oriental destiny, there came to his heart

“The resignation and the calm  
And wisdom of the East.”

It is a combination of this Oriental fatalism and an overpowering hunger for a newer mightier experience that inspires the unforgettable line,

“I have a rendezvous with Death,”

probably the most famous line of poetry written during the war. Several explanations of this line have been suggested by Amy Lowell, William Lyon Phelps, and others; but none seems to be so plausible as the one offered by Walter Adolphe Roberts, who knew Seeger intimately in Paris. Mr. Roberts says: “The word *rendez-vous* is one of the commonest words in the vocabulary of the French soldier, and was constantly used by officers and men in a variety of ways. *Donner un rendez-vous à quelqu’un* is to make an ordinary everyday appointment with some one. It is the equivalent of our slang word ‘date,’ but also bears connotations of place as well as time. It was commonly used to designate the time and place of attack. To Seeger, hearing the word used twenty times a day, and recognizing the beauty of the word itself, nothing could be more natural than to link the idea of a *rendez-vous* with that of Death, an idea which we know to have preoccupied him constantly at this time.” The juxtaposition of the ideas made him immortal wherever English or French is spoken, for his poems have been translated by the

French poets André Rivoire and Odette Raimondi-Mathéron.

Seeger rose to his full stature as a poet in his “Ode in Memory of the American Volunteers Fallen for France.” The ode, which was to have been read before the statue of Lafayette and Washington in Paris on Decoration day, May 30, 1916, started out to be a *tour de force* but now stands as the ultimate expression of Seeger’s genius. In simple dignity and poetic power the ode has not been surpassed by any poem inspired by the war. Beginning with a commemorative passage of quiet beauty, the poem ascends to an exalted glorification of the handful of Americans,

“Who not unmindful of the antique  
debt

Came back the generous path of  
Lafayette.”

As an American who was not wholly pleased by his country’s “too proud to fight” attitude, Seeger takes a bitter pride in saying:

“Accents of ours were in the fierce  
mêlée;

And on those furthest rims of  
hallowed ground,

Where the forlorn, the gallant  
charge expires,

When the slain bugler has long  
ceased to sound,

And on the tangled wires,

The last wild rally staggers, crum-  
bles, stops

Withered beneath the shrapnel’s  
iron showers:—

Now heaven be thanked, we gave a  
few brave drops;

Now heaven be thanked, a few  
brave drops were ours.”

The ode, written a month before his death, fittingly concludes the career of Alan Seeger the poet. The man was to go forward yet a little while, impatiently chafing under the restraint of trench warfare, longing for the moment of the brilliant attack. He was enamoured of death, not because he loved life less, but because he loved glory more. Alan Seeger did not want to die because he was sick of life. War had made him happy, strong, had inspired his best poetry, filled him with the resilient energy of a young man, and rescued him from a disillusionment that once had threatened to wreck him completely. Now, just as he was ready to enter upon the richest promise of life, and to enjoy those experiences of beauty which he still craved, the hunger for a triumphant death and a glorious immortality fired his imagination. And concentrating all his strength and love into the few precious days that remained, Alan Seeger joyfully awaited the time and place of his final rendezvous.

The tale of Seeger's end and of the days preceding it has been told by his closest friend Rif Baer, an Egyptian. Seeger had contracted bronchitis in the trenches, and after a two months' *cong  de convalescence* returned just in time for the big Somme offensive of 1916. "He had grown slightly thinner," says Baer, telling of his friend's return; "his face seemed slightly paler, and his fine eyes with their faraway look, ever lost in distant contemplation, were still as dreamy as ever . . . We saw each other every day . . . I shall never forget how one phrase was often on his lips: 'Life is only beauti-

ful when divided between War and Love. They are the only two things truly great and perfect . . . I have known love, and now I want to make war—but fine war—a war of bayonet charges, the desperate pursuit of an enemy in flight, the entry as a conqueror with trumpets sounding, into a town we have delivered. These are the delights of war. Where in civil life can be found any emotions so fine and strong as these?"

On June 21 Seeger and Baer left their sector in the Thiescourt Woods for an unknown destination which proved to be the Somme. On June 22, Seeger's twenty-eighth birthday, they reached Boves about 10 A.M. Under a blazing sun that seemed to have escaped from the furnaces of hell they started for Bayonvilliers. "It was the worst march since the war began," says Baer. "Weighed down by their sacks, prostrated by the heat, men fell by hundreds along the road. Hardly twenty of the two hundred forming the company arrived without having left the column. Seeger was one of these few. He told me afterward of the terrible effort he was forced to make, not to give up. At every halt he drank a drop of *tafia*—rum and coffee—to give himself heart, and when he reached the end of the march he was worn out, but proud. He had not left the ranks."

On June 30 they left Bayonvilliers and marched to Proyart, to be nearer the line of battle, which was at its height. The two friends renewed an agreement made many months before, that if one of them should be fatally wounded, the other was to kill him outright, thus sparing him the torture of a lingering death.

The day before his final charge, Seeger showed Baer a revolver, saying: "I have more luck than you. If I can still use my arm, I shall have no need of any one." And there is a story that goes about the Legion telling how Seeger, horribly wounded in the stomach and knowing that death was only a matter of a few agonizing hours, was seen to lift his revolver to his head and blow out the remaining sparks of his life.

The comrades were to have a leave of absence on July 4, but as they went into action on the night of the third Seeger said to his friend, "I cannot hope to see Paris again now before the sixth or seventh, but if this leave is not granted me—*maktoob, maktoob*," he finished with a smile.

Alan's sector was the first to go into action, and Seeger was in the first wave. Describing that final charge at Belloy-en-Santerre Rif Baer writes: "I caught sight of Seeger and called to him, making a sign with my hand. He answered with a smile. How pale he was! His tall silhouette stood out against the green of the cornfield. He was the tallest man in his section. His head erect and pride in his eye, I saw him running forward with bayonet fixed. Soon he disappeared, and that was the last I saw of my friend."

The next day, after the riddling cross-fire had ceased, Alan Seeger's body was found in a shell-pit into which he had crept to die. In that last sublime dash he had offered his body as a target to a battery of machine-guns and fell mortally wounded in the stomach. His company, after sustaining fearful losses, rode on an irresistible wave of victory into the town of Belloy-en-Santerre. But Alan Seeger was not among the triumphant company that delivered the little town. He had met death as he always hoped he should, charging an entrenched enemy, bayonet in hand, and the banners of his beloved France streaming over his head. He was buried in a deep trench, together with one hundred of his comrades on Hill 76, a little south of the village of Belloy.

We do not know what Seeger's last thoughts were as he lay mangled and bleeding upon the battle-field, but we may be certain that his spirit leaped forth to welcome death as it had always welcomed life. "*Inshallah*, death is but a transient thing," he used to say, firmly believing that it was but another step in the glorious and predestined pilgrimage toward a deeper experience of beauty, the only reality Alan Seeger ever knew.

# TO MEN OF GOOD-WILL

## *A Study of the Permanent Values of Christmas*

HERBERT PARRISH

“CAPTAIN,” said I to the mate.  
“Sir to you,” replied the mate.

“Will you smoke?” said I, handing him a cigar.

“That will I,” he answered, taking the weed.

You make no mistake calling a mate “captain.” He has invariably been captain—of something or other in the way of craft. He hopes to be a captain quite soon again. He is inwardly persuaded that he would make a better captain than the “old man” below taking a snooze. Therefore the title touches his pet complex. It soothes and stimulates him. He will begin to spin.

Thus it was that, under the broad and starry Southern sky on a moonlit night, the sails drawing taut in the steady trade, the vessel lifting evenly over the enormous swells, I heard the story of how the doctors administer the “black bottle” to obstreperous and moribund patients in hospitals. I listened to accounts of swordfish rising out of the water and stabbing seamen in small boats over the gunwales. I was told of coast-guards who retired from the service as millionaires after incredibly short seasons in the twelve-mile limit. Of gunmen along the docks of New York who would do a man

in for twenty-five dollars. Of a voodoo queen in Haiti. Of steering by dead-reckoning on the Grand Banks. Of a tribe on the West African coast that still eat “long pig.” Of priests in the South Seas who walk on red-hot stones. Of the sailor’s longing to leave the sea and settle down ashore. Tales for the marines. The tale of a tub.

That inferior constellation, the Southern Cross, glittered above the horizon. In the ecliptic swam the half-moon. And Jupiter was rising in the east.

“I have heard of people,” said I, “who have been able to see four of the moons of Jupiter with the naked eye.”

“Moons of Jupiter?” he queried vaguely.

I remarked on the size of the planet in comparison with our own satellite. A lecture by Einstein to a girls’ school.

“Humph!” he exclaimed, “it looks smaller to me.”

Eight bells struck.

“I’m goin’ below,” said the mate. “I allus read a chapter of the Good Book afore I turn in.”

It was Christmas eve, and I was conscious of the peculiar emotion that so often takes possession of the soul on that occasion. A nostalgia