
THE WHITE COMRADE

Nigel and I, one night just after Ypres,
Were struggling with our ancient college-French
Talking, or stumbling into talk, with one
Called René Paule, from an adjacent trench,
Who had been wounded in an early fight.
And he with eloquence and poetry
Like all his vivid race, made haste to tell
Of a strange rumor we had heard before,
How in the depths of plain unvarnished hell
Quivering with anguish so he could not move
And waiting for the stretcher-bearers' call,
He suddenly felt healing, cool and sweet,
As you might feel a fan on a hot day
Swayed by an unseen hand. And softly then
Closing his eyes on blessed, stealing sleep
He felt a touch, and looking up beheld
The kindest, sweetest eyes in all the world.
It was a Comrade in the khaki brown,
His face was tired, but the eyes were keen
And tender as a dewy flower at dawn.
And René, feeling once again the pain,
Grasped the hand tight, and looked into the eyes
For succor, and they held him there, serene,
And slowly, slowly conquered the strong pain.
And René saw the khaki melt away
Until the Comrade seemed all wrapt in white
As though sheer light had woven a robe for him,
And his strong eyes gleamed like an azure flame,
And he held René through the bitter night,