

The Owl

By Edward Thomas

Downhill I came, hungry, and yet not starved;
Cold, yet had heat within me that was proof
Against the North wind; tired, yet so that rest
Had seemed the sweetest thing under a roof.

Then at the inn I had food, fire, and rest,
Knowing how hungry, cold, and tired was I.
All of the night was quite barred out except
An owl's cry, a most melancholy cry

Shaken out long and clear upon the hill,
No merry note, nor cause of merriment,
But one telling me plain what I escaped
And others could not, that night, as in I went.

And salted was my food, and my repose,
Salted and sobered, too, by the bird's voice
Speaking for all who lay under the stars,
Soldiers and poor, unable to rejoice.

Source: Poems (1917)



Born in London and educated at Oxford University, Edward Thomas worked long hours as a contract writer to support his young family. He struck up a friendship with a new neighbor, then-unknown poet Robert Frost, who persuaded Thomas to give poetry a try. Under the pseudonym Edward Eastaway, Thomas published the volume *Six Poems* (1916) and composed more than 100 other poems. He died in the Battle of Arras in World War I.

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