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)