

Easy Service

When an empty sleeve or a sightless eye
Or a legless form I see,
I breathe my thanks to my God on High
For His watchful care o'er me.
And I say to myself, as the cripple goes
Half stumbling on his way:
I may brag and boast, but that brother knows
Why the old flag floats to-day.

I think as I sit in my cozy den
Puffing one of my many pipes
That I've served with all of my fellow men
The glorious Stars and Stripes.
Then I see a troop in the faded blue
And a few in the dusty gray,
And I have to laugh at the deeds I do
For the flag that floats to-day.

I see men tangled in pointed wire,
The sport of the blazing sun,
Mangled and maimed by a leaden fire
As the tides of battle run,
And I fancy I hear their piteous calls
For merciful death, and then
The cannons cease and the darkness falls,
And those fluttering things are men.

Out there in the night they beg for death,
Yet the Reaper spurns their cries,
And it seems his jest to leave them breath
For their pitiful pleas and sighs.
And I am here in my cosy room
In touch with the joys of life,
I am miles away from the fields of doom
And the gory scenes of strife.

I never have vainly called for aid,
Nor suffered real pangs of thirst,
I have marched with life in its best parade
And never have seen its worst.
In the flowers of ease I have ever basked,
And I think as the Flag I see
How much of service from some it's asked,
How little of toil from me.

Edgar Albert Guest (1881-1959)