

OLIVER AMES JR.

April 8, 1895 - July 27, 1918

Not in his noble death but in his way of life will our memory live and be always green. The bloody summer of 1918 was rich with sacrifice, as if God walked with men upon the battlefield to make them smile at death. To many a man this sudden giving of all he had was a peak, unexpectedly revealed at the end of life,—high ground in his being, the existence of which neither he nor those nearest him dreamed; it was the flowering of a supposedly barren soul, the momentary filling of life. But it was not so with Ames. His death beside the Ourcq was rather the epitome of his whole life, the summing up in the briefest moment of time of all that had gone before.

His Commanding Officer, who had hurried forward to steady a bitterly engaged group of his battalion wrote: "Ames came running up behind me to look out for me. I ordered him back, but he just smiled and said he was going to stay with me. He came up and lay beside me ... I half turned, and as I did, a sniper's bullet struck Ames in the ear. He died instantly."

There is much more than devoted bravery in this death; something which, like Sidney's act on the field of Zutphen, summons to the mind the entire life of which this was the perfect end. As he died, he lived. He had an instinct for the true things in life; and kept his simplicity untarnished. Wealth, which taints so many, could not spoil him; at twenty-two he was as sincere, as earnest, as devoid of the false views and values with which luxury and affluence so commonly disfigure men, as when he was a child. To the soldiers who served under him



he was "a good scout, as white as a white man should be"; they who had daily contact with him appreciated his natural sincerity.

Quiet he was, shy in many ways as a girl. Perhaps only those who knew him best realized the quality of his ideals. He practised a true, straight life; he did not preach. Never imposing his opinion or his will on others, in a subtler way, though quite unconsciously, he benefited us all. He played fairly and squarely. He loved games and with typical earnestness loved to win; but, above this, every stroke was a true stroke, every effort an honest effort. Neither fortune nor desire could bend his honor to act meanly; his instinct and his will were both against unsoundness and untruth.

For a person of warm, strong senses it was all the more beautiful that he was pure in body as in spirit. His passions were ribbed with conscience; yet not prudishly nor unnaturally. He kept himself always as a young man about to run a race; he suffered the strongest emotions without a blemish; and thus, when the time came, gave his heart perfect and untouched by evil.

No thought of him is complete that does not compass his delight in life. This was a part of his simplicity and cleanness of spirit - his zest for the sun and wind of out of doors, for the freeness and freshness of living. He played at all sports; his laugh was happy in the field, and his smile and warm greeting ever ready. It was sweet to him to feel the wind on his cheek and in his close-curl'd hair; and sweet to be in his company in such unaffected enjoyment.

As his heart was clear and fair, so it was tender. He was a gentle judge and a devoted friend. With the means to



be generous in worldly things, to those he loved he was generous of his heart. If his friends grieved, he grieved; their joys were his; and his understanding sympathy went out to meet them. And thus imperceptibly he made himself a part of many lives. Some of his simple faith, some of his unflinching honor, some of his cleanliness, no German bullet could strike down in the Ourcq valley; some of it is planted to endure the weathering of time in other hearts.

Robert Cutler.

Brookline, December 1919.

*I wrote this in Brookline at the request  
of Mrs Owen Ames for the St Mark's  
Memorial Book - in which it was  
published R.C.*

