

## The Twentieth Maine Regiment at Gettysburg

On the first, second, and third, the trident  
Of the blood's Poseidon sank deeper, afresh  
To the sea of its origin, and when, godsent,

It became the standard in Lincoln's flesh,  
It sank again more firmly, for sallow troops  
Prayed as penitents, wielding sleeve and mesh

Of arms, with bayonets, frantically in loops  
Of mind, arresting and recovering to hold  
A yard of rock or ground where the will droops  
Only into mire and lesion.

A blade will mold

In time, if kept there, wet in misting sun:  
The fragrant hill below, where peaches fall,  
The lisp of leaves, the broken lines that run

Into ditches, the weaving and irrupting pall  
Of smoke, the riband near a rose, the trickle  
Of dew, the twinge of thorn, and the dying call

Of a horn. There the dull gray robe and sickle  
Prevail as the finger feels a fragile spear  
Of bone. Who were they of the bronze and nickel

Medals who received canister and shot at the angle,  
Devoid of power that flamed the face? They railed  
Into death, fumbling the flags of war that dangle

Now from stakes. Off white and dimly unassailed,  
The monuments stand where the dying, once impaled  
In weeds, flourish into the air of another century

As yield of newer orders and in Christ are nailed  
Into lengths of rhetoric that seem less than fury,  
Less than insurgency, and less than incidental worry.

—Clinton F. Larson