

We're Almost Home

a Poem of the Battle of Franklin, November 30,
1864

by Daniel Mallock (February 2018)



The Green Hill, Winslow Homer, 1878

Such a sight I never saw and can never expect to see again . . . You could have walked all over the field upon dead bodies without stepping upon the ground . . . It was a wonder that any man escaped alive . . . I never saw anything like that field, and never want to again.—Confederate Corps Commander Major General Frank Cheatham in a post war interview.

Cool Springs' and Franklin's office blocks

Are lit up at night, waiting

Beyond time, troops marched close
And came so close to home

Down Winstead Hill—straight lines,
Banners, bayonets, bitter hopes.

Rabbits rush ahead into blue
Lines steeled, awed, waiting.

Cool winter breeze moves flags,
All dream of home, love, life—

Night shadows move across Franklin
So calm, grand, almost home;

Blue and gray in the night light fire
Turning hot and cold and red;

Cannon, sword, lurid shriek,
Guns with sharp shrill flames

Last, and first prayers to God to
Mother father somewhere close and

Away, far from Franklin's red fields
Where hare are alive.

At the works they die in straight lines,
On the top Adams' horse

Like a monument; at the base
Are the dead.

Behind the works children scream,
From their cellars see hell

Hear it, smell it, are shattered,
Wounded, haunted forever.

They lay for days on Franklin's
Winter fields close to home;

They lie in straight lines in Franklin

Ground, the lost in trenches—

In Cool Springs' morning

Old wars and dead heroes;

At Franklin dawn is there

in dim light-almost home now

Wind moves the barren trees

Like flags on Franklin's fields.

Daniel Mallock is a historian of the Founding generation and of the Civil War and is the author of