Pershing At The Front

by
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The General came in a new tin hat
To the shell-torn front where the war was at;
With a faithful Aid at his good right hand
He made his way towards No Man's Land,
And a tough Top Sergeant there they found,
And a Captain, too, to show them round.

Threading the ditch, their heads bent low,
Towards the lines of the watchful foe
They came through the murk and powder stench
Till the Sergeant whispered, "Third-line trench!"
And the Captain whispered, "Third-line trench!"
And the Aid repeated, "Third-line trench!"
And Pershing answered - not in French-
"Yes, I see it. Third-line trench."

Again they marched with wary tread,
Following on where the Sergeant led
Through the wet and the muck as well,
Till they came to another parallel.
They halted there in the mud and drench,
And the Sergeant whispered, "Second-line trench!"
And the Captain whispered, "Second-line trench!"
And the Aid repeated, "Second-line trench!"
And Pershing nodded: "Second-line trench!"

Yet on they went through mire like pitch
Till they came to a fine and spacious ditch
Well camouflaged from planes and Zeps
Where soldiers stood on firing steps
And a Major sat on a wooden bench;
And the Sergeant whispered, "First-line trench!"
And the Captain whispered, "First-line trench!"
And the Aid repeated, "First-line trench!"
And Pershing whispered, "Yes, I see.
How far off is the enemy?"

And the faithful Aide he asked, asked he,
"How far off is the enemy?"
And the Captain breathed in a softer key,
"How far off is the enemy?"

The silence lay in heaps and piles
And the Sergeant whispered, "Just three miles."
And the Captain whispered, "Just three miles."
And the Aid repeated, "Just three miles."
"Just three miles!" the General swore,
"What in the hell are we whispering for?"
And the faithful Aide the message bore,
"What in the hell are we whispering for?"
And the Captain said in a gentle roar,
"What in the hell are we whispering for?"
"Whispering for?" the echo rolled;
And the Sergeant whispered, "I have a cold."