

"IF YE BREAK FAITH"

One of the great pictures painted during the war is entitled "The Great Sacrifice". Jesus is shown on his cross. A halo is about his head. At the foot of the cross a soldier is lying dead. One hand rests on the feet of Jesus, the blood is flowing from a bullet wound in the head. The hand on the feet of Jesus conveys the thought of the artist. That touch unites Jesus and the soldier in a common sacrifice. The soldier is not represented as a saint. That would not be true. But he is one who strives to reach out and touch the feet of perfect goodness and eternal love, touches them and dies trusting in divine mercy. That is one of the great pictures produced by this war. It is great because it is true, great because it is beautiful, great also because of the faith and hope that it expresses and inspires.

The war upon which we may at this season very properly reflect has taught us some very important lessons. Among others not the least is this: that life does not consist in the abundance of the things a man possesses, but rather in the amount and quality of the service he is able to render to his fellows. Self must be forgotten. The soldiers who have received decorations are those who have forgotten themselves. They didn't think they did anything out of the ordinary. It was that very quality about their service that gave it its air of distinction and won the tangible expression of a people's gratitude. So we should, now that peace has come, as well as in war

Measure our life by loss and not by gain
Not by the wine drunk but by the wine poured forth
For love's strength standeth in love's sacrifice
And he who suffers most, has most to give.

I have spoken of a great picture, may I refer now to a great poem. In it there occurs the phrase with which I head this writing, "If ye break faith". The soldier lying in Flanders fields, speaks, and his voice sounds over the booming of the guns. "If ye break faith we shall not sleep though poppies blow in Flanders fields." Perhaps it may seem to some as though the occasion for these words was past with the cessation of fighting. They are a call to men to rally to the support of those who were fighting, a call to take the place of the fallen. No longer do we need to send men to fight in France and Flanders, but the challenge is still a challenge. Perhaps there has been no time when the call was so inspirative and bound up with so great possibilities of good or ill as it is at the present. Did our men fight and die merely to defeat the Prussian foe? We misread the meaning of their sacrifice if we think so. That was their primary aim but not the whole or ultimate aim. They fought to defend the truth against a falsehood, the right against the wrong, the weak against the strong, justice from injustice, and righteousness against unrighteousness.

So if we would keep faith with them who died in Flanders fields we must still fight on in the cause for which they died. It will be a sad day when having conquered the Prussian tyrant we shall submit to the cleverer tyranny and oppression of the devil. The foe that is without is less deadly than the foe that is within. An enemy in our home is more dangerous than one outside. And one in the secret of the heart is most dangerous of all.

The important matter now is that we do not overlook the deeper meanings of the war. We break faith with the dead soldiers when we go back to the ideals of selfishness and ambition that were dominant before the war. We break faith with them when we cease to consider the moral substructure of society, not only of our own part of it, which is most important. We must be far more careful of the moral quality of our homes, our pleasures, our business, our schools and our churches. A deeper sincerity must ring through all our life. It is

upon the moral quality of our thoughts and actions that the future peace of the world depends. The East and the West henceforth are one. Men of the West and men of the East have toiled and fought and suffered and died together. They have been linked together by the mingling of their own blood in a common sacrifice and they must henceforth live together and endeavor to understand one another. Our ideals and our thinking must be shared with them and theirs must be allowed the courtesy of an open-minded hospitality. What is good in one must be entertained by the other. We must therefore strive to maintain wisely the peace the dead have died to obtain. The challenge our dead soldiers make to us is still imperative. 'Keep faith' and let them sleep in peace.

We that are left must 'carry on'. We feel the impulse of a larger life and see the light of the dawning day. It is a great time to live. It is a great privilege to be able to look forward to making an investment of life in Canada, so vast, so varied, so rich in possibility, so beautiful, so free. We go on with our work, we enter a new year looking behind, and lingeringly remember the men who have died and given us in their death a stimulus to follow a nobler ideal. They are not mourning where they are:

"Oh if the sonless mothers weeping,
The widowed girls, could look inside
The country that hath them in keeping,
Who went to the great war and died,
They would rise and put their mourning off
And say, "Thank God he has enough."

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