

## ARE WE WORTH DYING FOR?

From a Sermon for Stay-at-Homes,  
by Rev. John Haynes Holmes in the Voice.

Are we worth dying for? It would be a great mistake, however if we confined ourselves to this merely personal consideration of the problem. For there is something much more momentous in this war than any mere personal relations, however serious and searching these may be. For it we may trust the interpretation placed upon the conflict by the governments of the Allies, the American soldiers are not fighting for Americans, any more than the English soldiers are fighting for Englishmen or the French poilus for Frenchmen. Not even may we believe that the Belgian troops are fighting for the men and women and ravaged soil of Belgium. Above and beyond all these personal and national considerations, we are old, is the cause which they all represent and to which they are all committed—the cause, namely, of democracy. We are fighting for the perpetuation of the society we have builded, of the political, social and industrial fabric which we have reared, of that whole civilization of free and enlightened peoples which constitutes the distinctive and beneficent feature of our western world. This is what the Allies are fighting for, this is what has brought America into the battle, this is what our young men are preparing to die for on the fields of France. Our civilization as a cause and not ourselves as individuals is what is today at stake in the Great War.

Now the very moment that this interpretation of the European struggle is accepted, our question, Are we worth dying for? is shifted from the inquiry as to whether you and I as persons are worth dying for, to the question as to whether the society of which we are a part is worth dying for. And here I must confess that I find myself confronted by an answer that is not altogether different from the one which I gave in reference to the query about ourselves. The civilization which we have been building during the last three or four hundred years, judged by its fruits at least, is not anything to boast of, and I doubt very much if it is anything really worth dying for. Indeed, if I thought that the final and total result of this vast struggle between Germany and the Allies, with its millions of dead and wounded, its incalculable destruction of property and treasure, its indescribable misery of unoffending peoples the world around, was to be nothing better and higher than the restoration of civilization as it existed just before the war broke out, I think I should be tempted to question if the cause was worth the life of a single soldier in the ranks. Universal discontent with our political and industrial achievements, was the characteristic feature of our life three years ago, and this discontent was based upon the undisputed fact that our civilization, whatever its material triumphs, was a moral and spiritual failure. It is true that knowledge had never been so widespread, mechanical efficiency so marvelous, natural resources so abundant and accessible. It is true that political democracy had been born, the laws of sanitation discovered, and the science of communication developed to the point of miracle. In many ways, our civilization was the most marvelous the world has ever known. But the great masses of the people were still wretchedly poor, starvation, disease and prostitution were still unconquered, the slavery of toil still broke the bodies and blighted the hearts of men. The old evils, in a word, were at the best only tempered, not abolished; and to these were added the new and yet more dreadful evils of great cities, industrial monopolies, economic imperialism, moral instability, the vast menace of international war, and all the lust and greed that belong to a world at struggle with itself. When the twentieth century dawned, man had such power in his hands as was never wielded even by the angels. Never had he been so truly able to be the master of his own destiny and the creator of his own world. But he used this power for material and not spiritual ends, dedicated it to struggle and not concord, and with it sought selfish and not unselfish works. With the result of confusion, disorder, waste, poverty, suspicion, hate—and now at last, as the natural spawn of such a breed, the universal cataclysm of the Great War! We look at the horror which is Germany and shudder; but I am not altogether sure that this military monster is not the fruit which gives us knowledge of the tree. Said Alfred Russell Wallace, second only to Darwin among the scientists of our time, a man of exact knowledge, careful observation, and sober speech, after naming in detail the evils characteristic of modern civilization—"Taking account of these various groups of undoubted facts, many of which are so gross, so terrible, that they cannot be overstated, it is not too much to say that our whole system of society is rotten from top to bottom, and the social environment as a whole, in relation to its possibilities and claims, the worst that

the world has ever seen."

This is our civilization as we had it three years ago. If you ask me if that civilization is worth dying for, I tell you, No! And yet it is being died for by millions of noble men in every great country of the modern world. Why, if the worth of our social order were to be measured by the blood and tears that have been shed for its preservation it would be precious beyond anything that has ever been built by the hands of man. Something there must be here which seems to most men today to be worth while. Something there is here now, if not before, which has been made eternally worth while by the sacrifices which have been offered on its behalf. And if this something is not to be found in what civilization actually was yesterday, then must it be found in what civilization may be tomorrow, and what the millions of these fighting men are willing to pledge their lives it shall be tomorrow. Not, therefore, in what civilization was, but in what good men desired and had faith that it might be made—not in the reality that festered like some poisonous growth upon the earth, but in the dream that blossomed like a fragrant flower within the heart—not in the disorder, struggle and bloodshed of the society, that bred this war, but in the order, co-operation and brotherly accord of the new society that shall after this war bring in the thousand years of peace—here is to be found the thing that is worth dying for. And here, if I mistake not, is the thing for which the vast majority of men who have gone, or are going, into this war, are willing, nay glad, to lay down their lives. They are not fighting to preserve or to restore the old order. Nobody wants to see the world that crashed to ruin three years ago brought back to curse mankind. If the old boundary lines, the old armaments, the old alliances, the old balances of power the old suspicions, jealousies and hatreds, are to be revived, then is the sacrifice of these millions of young lives a futile and a tragic thing. But if on the ruins of the old world, gone forever, a new world shall be built, then indeed may we declare that these unnumbered dead "shall not have died in vain." Hence the programs of reconstruction in government, economics, domestic relations, international institutions, religion, which are the product of all the thinking minds of France, England and America at this moment!

Now, it is just here, in this matter of reconstruction, that there comes the message for the stay-at-homes. We have more upon our hands this day than the confession of our sins, and the rectification of our inward personal lives. We have as well the building of this new world, the construction of this new society, the bringing in of this new and better day. The Kingdom of God, of which Jesus talked so many years ago, is laid upon our souls as it has been laid upon no other generation of Christians since the dreadful day of Calvary. Here are these myriads of youthful lives poured out in bounteous sacrifice! Here are these millions of dead bones sowing the sweet earth as for a divine harvest! Here are the blood and tears and agony not of a nation's but of a world's despair! What is it all for? How is it to be made worth while? Only by the supreme sacrifice in us, as well as in our boys! The sacrifice of all we have and all we are to the Kingdom of God, the new democracy of man, the world as Christ dreamed it and as God has had it in his heart through all the sad, dark years! A little while ago, and every proposal for reform, every crusade for a better world, every struggle for social emancipation, was met by the opposition of "interests"—personal interests, business interests, political interests, class interests, national interests. These oppositions seemed defensible at that time, but they are now defensible no more. Henceforth they stand as the sin against the Holy Ghost. Millions of boys have died, trusting in us who live to see that the new world of which they dreamed, should be established. We are pledged to their dead bones, my friends—and the pledge must be redeemed. Said Mr. Britling, writing in the early dawn of his dead son—"Let us make ourselves watchers and guardians of the order of the world. . . . If only for love of our dead. . . . Let us pledge ourselves to service. Let us set ourselves with all our minds and hearts to the perfecting and working out of the methods of democracy and the ending forever of the kings and emperors and priestcrafts and bands of adventurers, the traders and owners and forestallers who betrayed man kind into this morass of hate and blood—in which our sons are lost—in which we flounder still."

Such is my question, Are we worth dying for? And such is my answer! We are not worth dying for, as we stand today—either ourselves, or the world that we have made. Had we been worth dying for, there were no need to die. But death has come to others; and to us, the stay-at-homes, must come the stern resolve that it shall not be in vain. Like the Athenians of old, we may well give heed to the words of Pericles, spoken over the bodies of the soldiers dead in the first year of the Peloponnesian War. "Each one having given his body to the commonwealth, they receive instead there-

of a most remarkable sepulchre, not that wherein they are buried so much as that other wherein their glory is laid up, on all occasions both of world and deed, to be remembered evermore. These who valiantly fighting have died we must be zealous to emulate. For it is fit that every man of you that is left, should be likeminded, ready to undergo all travail for the common good."

## A NON POLITICIAN GOVERN.

Here is what two leading Canadian Liberal papers say:

When Mr. William E. Lemon, former Assistant Postmaster, and for Post Office Department, was yesterday officially installed as Postmaster of Toronto—head of the largest and busiest Post Office in the Dominion the Government gave gratifying evidence of the sincerity of its determination to banish the spoils system from the outside Civil Service.—Toronto Globe.

Commenting on the above the Montreal Herald says:—

What a change from the old system! There is a story that when patronage was rampant, a certain person who was appointed Postmaster of a large city near Westmount, upon no other qualification than that he was a broken-down war-horse, called up the chief deputy on taking up the appointment, and said:—

"Now you go ahead as before! You needn't bother me with any details. All I want is my salary! In other words, 'You do the work, and I'll draw the salary you ought to get!'"

Let the Union Government maintain the standard set in Toronto in the matter of appointments and even the sceptics will be convinced of the good intentions of the group at present in power.

## VAST STORES HELD AT RUSSIAN PORTS.

A statement issued yesterday by the National City Bank of New York regarding the value of war materials shipped to the Russian Arctic ports of Archangel and Kola, where a state of war now exists, gives an indication of the great amount of stores which are stacked up in the neighborhood of those ports and which are being guarded by American marines as well as fighting men of the other allies.

Since the beginning of the war \$750,000,000 worth of materials were sent to the two ports from this country. But the rail service between the seaboard and the interior early became clogged. In 1917 the shipments to Archangel and Kola totalled \$314,630,000 most of which probably remains there. Since the beginning of this year \$3,000,000 worth of supplies have been sent.

Including materials sent to the Pacific port of Vladivostok, American has sent to Russia, altogether, goods to the value of \$1,080,000,000 since the war began.—New York World, July 9.

## MARITIME NAMES IN CASUALTY LIST.

Ottawa, July 11—Maritime names in casualty list:—

## SERVICES.

A. Casey, Shediac, N. B.

## Gassed.

F. Herman, Dartmouth.

Ottawa, July 12—Maritime names in the casualty list:—

## INFANTRY.

## Wounded.

P. Arseneau, Petit Rocher, N. B.

P. C. W. Alvard, Moncton.

## III.

R. E. Banks, Mount Rose, N. S.

## Accidentally Killed.

W. P. McKenna, Charlottetown.

W. E. Johnston, Blackville, N. B.

## RAILWAY TROOPS.

## Died.

F. Hefferman, Dartmouth, N. S.

## SPECIAL SESSION OF SUPREME COURT.

Ottawa, July 13—The Canada Gazette today contains the formal notice calling the Supreme Court in special session on Thursday July 18 to hear argument as to the validity of the order-in-council of April 29, cancelling exemptions in classes under the military service act. It is expected that argument will not take up more than a couple of days and that Judgment will be given by the Supreme court before the end of the present month.

## An Unexpected Meeting

ANYONE who knows the Canadian Pacific Rockies knows that north of the main line of the C. P. R. and in the neighborhood of the headwaters of the Bow River there is good country. At one point where a crystal lake nestles in the chill Gray rocks of 10,000 feet elevation there can almost always be found fresh indications of the peak dwellers.

Now, old goat hunters will tell you that there is nothing more difficult to approach from below than a band of Rocky Mountain goats. Their keen eyes and sensitive senses, their exaggerated caution and incessant watchfulness makes it a game of highest skill. But once let a hunter get above a band of goats and they are practically at his mercy. Trained as they are in the safety of the peaks, knowing full well that danger comes from below they watch the down slopes and are inclined to be careless about the trail behind, down which they have come in safety.

An old he-goat, tall as a yearling



lake, he stopped astounded and

angry. A fierce black animal, neither wolf nor bear nor cat, faced him with fiery eyes, gleaming teeth, and deep throat rumblings. It was the lone hunting dog of a hunter. The dog had been trained to get above the goats and dispute passage until the hunter came to kill.

"But what's the use of killing him when I want to get sheep further up," the hunter reasoned, as he snapped his kodak shutter and whistled the reluctant dog to heel, while the goat still stood paralyzed with amazement.

L. V. K.

## - Sphagnum Moss as a Dressing -



Ladies of McGill University Women's Union making surgical dressings of Sphagnum Moss.

(Reading from Left to Right)—Mrs. W. Grant Stewart, Miss V. Hamell, Mrs. E. Maxwell, Mrs. R. W. Lee, Mrs. A. E. Garrow, Mrs. A. D. Blackader, Mrs. C. W. Colby, Mrs. F. D. Adams, Miss Mitchell.



(Reading from Left to Right)—Mrs. J. Harkness, Mrs. E. E. Howard, Miss E. King, (Standing) Mrs. W. H. Butten, Mrs. F. H. Pitcher, Mrs. J. B. Porter, Miss Nelson, Mrs. Peck, Mrs. J. C. Kennedy, Mrs. C. E. Moyses.

SPHAGNUM Moss, to which attention has been drawn by the fatal accident to Mr. Harry James Smith, the American Sphagnum Moss expert, is one of Canada's natural resources, one great value of which has been brought to light by the war. The use of mosses in surgical dressings dates at least as far back as the Napoleonic wars, but the demand for and extensive use of Sphagnum Moss did not materialize until 1915, and even in the Spring of 1916 its use was in the experimental stage. So great has become the demand that Great Britain is no longer able to fill it, and Canada and the United States are now being actively exploited for this highly absorbent dressing.

The first effective work on this side of the Atlantic was initiated by Prof. Porter of McGill University, who secured samples of various qualities of moss from the British authorities early in 1916 and then explored the bogs of Eastern Nova Scotia until he was able to locate supplies of material which the same authorities accepted as "perfect." The first sphagnum dressings sent overseas were made up from this moss in the autumn of 1916 by the Junior Red Cross of Guysboro, Nova Scotia.

Since then the industry has developed steadily. The McGill University Women's Union established a sphagnum department in a large laboratory very generously placed at their disposal by the University Medical School in the autumn of 1916, and from that day until this has been preparing moss and shipping dressings. Another important function of this organization has been to make up experimental sphagnum dressings of many sorts to try out the different grades of Canadian material under varying conditions.

During the winter of 1917 another work room was started at Dalhousie University, Halifax, and the Canadian Red Cross definitely adopted sphagnum for hospital dressings and prepared to open working centres on a large scale. Unfortunately the changes in the Atlantic shipping situation which resulted from unrestricted submarine warfare necessitated a temporary check; but the work of exploration and development was continued.

The late Mr. Harry James Smith of New York became interested in the possibilities of sphagnum last spring, and after spending some time with small pond. Before any attempt is made to collect moss in quantities all of the bogs in the district should be examined with a view to locating the largest supplies of good material, and this preliminary examination should be made by persons who have had previous experience in collecting Sphagnum.

Owing to the great variations in usefulness of different kinds of Sphagnum, and the fact that different species grow very much intermixed, the material has to be collected by people who have been trained to know good moss from bad, and even an experienced collector will often have difficulty in deciding just what to take and what to leave when he first visits a new locality.

The accompanying photographs show the work of the McGill Women's Union. No. 1 illustrates the preparation and drying of sphagnum and the manufacture of dressings. No. 2, the general soldiers' comforts work. The Union was organized during the first weeks of the war from among the families of the Governors and staff of the University. Its original purpose was to help provide "soldiers' comforts" for McGill graduates and students on active service, and as these now number over 2,200, the possibilities of its work may be imagined. During the three and a half years of its existence the Union has expended nearly \$8,000 on the purchase of high grade materials, which have been made up by its members into socks, caps, mufflers, pyjamas, shirts, etc., to a total of about 9,000 articles of clothing alone, to say nothing of an immense number of sphagnum dressings, etc.

The organizer and first president of the Union was Mrs. H. Walter; since then the chair has been filled successively by Mrs. E. E. Howard, Mrs. J. B. Porter and Mrs. J. W. Ross, the present President. The Sphagnum Committee of the Union was organized in 1916 under the chairmanship of Lady Gordon, and its present Chairwoman is Mrs. Porter. The Treasurer of the Union is Mrs. A. McGoun and the Secretary Mrs. A. Willey. Any correspondence regarding the work of the Union should be addressed to Miss S. M. Balnbridge, Hon. Sec. Committee on Sphagnum Dressings, Canadian Red Cross Society, care McGill University, Montreal.