



## BY HENRY WILLIAMSON.

This most moving and brilliantly written article, by the winner of the Haworthen Prize for 1928, is in continuance of the now famous "Daily Express" new series in which distinguished men and women are reaffirming their faith in certain things that, to them, matter most in life. Among forthcoming contributors will be Viscount Castlerose, Editor of the much-discussed "Londoner's Log" in the "Sunday Express"; May Eskin, author of many short stories, novels, and films; Hannen Sufiier, Humbert Wolfe, and Ethel Mannin, the novelist.

THE church in the peaceful village where I live has a tower as in an iced while the grining, smoking parapet above the rim of my helmet sprays an lashes with numerals shines in the southern wall. It was built into the tower as a memorial to those men of the parish who fell in the great war. Down in the porch is an illuminated scroll with a list of the names of those who made the great sacrifice.

Sometimes, when the ringers go up into the room where hang the ropes with the coloured sallies, I go with them, climbing on up the worn stone steps of the dim spiral stairway, to the bells. The ropes and wheels begin to creak; the bells begin to swing, and the tower trembles. Then with a dinnig crash the metal tongues smite the hoop bronze mouths, and the immense torrent of sound pours out of the narrow doorway.

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and my limbs tremble and stiffen our guns are "back on the first war, my dear chap; it's deep in objective," and Kitchener's Army, human nature." They may say, as with all its hopes and beliefs, has found its grave on those northern slopes of the Somme battlefield.

A year drifts by, and I am standing on a duckboard by a flooded and foul bank in the pale, pallid rainy darkness to the cries of men lost in the morasses of third Ypres. To seek them is to drown slowly over, and lie still. Others with them. . . . The living are roll and roll, and scream and grip still toiling on, homeless and without horizons, doing dreadful things under heaven that none want to do, through the long wet weeks, the months, of a bare sodden winter out of doors.

And I go on with aching feet, up and down over ground like a huge ruined honeycomb, and ray some of them, tested beyond

Sometimes things seem even more homeless, as when I hear a few hundred school children, marched to the local picture palace for patriotic purposes, cheering and yelling at film, which only faintly suggests reality. "The Somme," frantically cheering the "British" heroes, even when one poor lad in grey, who went forth to fetch water for a dying comrade, was knocked over by a shell.

The children, I know, are but distorting mirrors of a grown-up mental attitude; but surely, after all these nineteen centuries, it is time that people should begin to know what they do. Last year, nearly ten years after the war, I was called a traitor by

**SCHOOLBOYS  
OF TO-DAY.**

a certain old man because I dared to suggest that our duty to our fellow men should not end at the cliffs of Dover; so I returned to my old comrades in the scarred and rolling country of the Somme and the Hindenburg Line.

\* \* \*

Here, in the beautiful desolation of rush and willow in the tracts unploughed, the narrow and selfish ideals of nationalism are not set hard; men do not despise and hate others they have never seen. Here I see plainly how the hope of the world lies in the child, let us free the child. We must free the child. We must

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*Here I see plainly how the hope of the world lies in the child. We must free the child.*

Henry Williamson, in the accompanying article.



The great sound sweeps other thought away into the air, and the earth fades; the powerful wraith of those four years of the war enters into me, and the torrent becomes the light and clangour of massed guns that thrall the senses. I take the weight and strength of the barrage, and grow mighty with it, until it becomes but a seam of sound niched with flashes and puny in space and time controlled by the vaster roar of stars in their age-long travail through elemental darkness. I see all life created by those flaming suns of the night, and out of life arises a radiance, wan and phantasmal and pure, the light of Christos.

The wrath of the war, glimmering with this inner vision, bears me to the wide and shattered country of the Somme, to every broken, wood and trench, and sunken lane, among the broad, straggling belts of rusty wire smashed and twisted in the chalky loam, while the ruddy clouds of brick-dust hang over the shelter villages by day, and at night, the eastern horizon roars and bubbles with light.

And everywhere in these desolate places I see the faces and figures of enslaved men, the marching columns pearl-hued with chalky dust on the sweat of their heavy drab clothes; the files of carrying parties laden and staggering in the flickering moonlight of gun-fire; the "waves" of assaulting troops lying silent and pale on the tape-lines of the jumping-off places.

Again I crouch with them while the steel glacier rushing by just overhead severs away every syllable, every fragment of a message bawled into my ear, while my mind begins to stare fixedly into the bitter dark of imminent death,

on the abstract virtues of form, tradition, reverence, tan ungrown mind is to produce something unnatural, false, and death-bringing. The faceless corruption of Ypres was the grave of the old-world ideals! The virtues must develop from within, from the imagination, not from any forms of idolatry. The summer is beautiful to the others, and we begin to run forward to catch up with the barrage, gasping and sweating, in months of drill and relentless torture, for who could have sounding phrases that heralded the big push was war, for they know that the enemy soldiers are the same men as themselves, suffering and disillusionsed in exactly the same

I have a little boy now, a wild little innocent who looks at birds in the sky, at poppies and butterflies and dandelions, and thinks no mean thought, and sees no harm anywhere. His little friends in the village play at trains and "motorcars", with him; he calls me "Daddy Wee," and runs away to be chased with cries of delight. Must he, too, with those friends, traverse a waste place of the earth; must the blood and sweat of his generation drip in agony, where poppies have grown, and corn?

\* \* \*

I leave my bells and descend to the fountains black smoke of earth again; and if I try to explain why I want to reive those howitzer shells; and the loud crackling of the machine-guns old days, to tear the truth out of the past, perhaps some one will say to me, "Oh, the war! A hundred engines; and soon no one is tragedie," wasn't it? It is best forgotten, or, "There always will be

\* \* \*

left standing."

(Apologia)

as a friendly visit, 'Don't talk about the war before my boy, or else, if you don't mind. I don't want him unsettled: you know what youngsters are — very impressionable. And after all, there is such a thing as loyalty to one's country, you know.'

more hopeless, as when I

Sometimes it seems like more, but, the local pictures  
near a few hundred school children, wanted to the local pictures  
believe for patriotic purposes, cheering <sup>+ waving</sup> at a film  
showing partly <sup>reality</sup> reality, called "Be Sombre", ~~practically~~  
~~practically~~ cheering ~~the~~ ~~so poor looking~~ the (apparently unfeigned and  
"British heroes" in their ~~good~~ immaculate uniforms, and waving  
the "German cowards" so they <sup>should</sup> be hurrying away  
from the Service armistice (Slacks of the 8<sup>a</sup> Division at  
Liverpool!). They would even when we poor had a good  
who was forced to jettie rats for a dying comrade,  
knocked over by a shell.

was Knocked over by a shell. The distorting mirror & telescope were broken, and the glass was shattered.

Re children, & how, are but the destroy mirror of  
now - up mental attitude; at, surely, after the letter  
of lost generation & Europe, it is time

~~all soldiers - know what to do.~~

people's names. One year nearly ten years after he was born, I heard it suggested that Dr. Darrow was a

This year, many became I dare say at the straits of Borneo -

and to meet too

for my set courses - in the morning time to meet  
the rising sun live with me there

returned to the States; and the two, and they have been  
in touch with each other, and they have been quite pleased at the

country & the South & deal with them, and ~~has~~ give reason  
for I am ~~wanted~~ & truths which ~~are~~ a la gravage the

for I am ~~concerned~~ the rules when it comes to the same rule goes

again. There is the truth) has to be  
for the coming) part of all who  
want to be idealists & national  
universals, it is not true, but that

deaths: but he was a beautiful boy. He died in the hills near the sea, never to return to his home.

generated the wrongs in our  
country, so we must  
be able to see clearly the wrongs we  
have made for ourselves. That  
is the way to make us  
narrow.

edatory, which do not have teeth, I suppose  
all species of *Ctenophora* & *Crustacea* eat  
the flesh of a ~~nematode~~ <sup>annelid</sup>

universal, and the range of  
ways that maintain the range of  
feels which is paid off  
in ranges in such  
heightened

still from the things in nationalism, he feels can generally be arranged millions more), persons

U.S. imports to million dollars, 1950-1954

*(New committee, ~~existing~~)* ✓ 

ADAIR MONTHLY

October, 1928

# I BELIEVE IN THE MEN WHO DIED

BY HENRY WILLIAMSON, Hawthornden Prize Winner for 1928. Author of "The Pathway."

We have received numerous requests from our readers to reprint this article by an ex-officer in the British Army which appeared in the "Daily Express" of 17th September, 1928. We are able to comply with their wishes by the kind permission of Mr. Henry Williamson and by the courtesy of the Editor of the "Daily Express."

The church in the peaceful village where I live has a tower of grey stone, in which is a belfry. A clock with gilt hands and Roman numerals shines in the southern wall. It was built into the tower as a memorial to those men of the parish who fell in the great war. *(two years ago)* Down in the porch is an illuminated scroll with a list of the names of those who did not come home.

Sometimes, when the ringers go up into the room where hang the ropes with the coloured sallies, I go with them, climbing on up the worn stone steps of the dim spiral stairway, *(the bells, the ropes and wheels begin to creak; the bells begin to swing, and the tower trembles.)* Then with a dinning crash the metal tongues smite the deep bronze mouths, and an immense torrent of sound pours out of the narrow doorway.

The great sound sweeps other thought away into the air, and the earth fades; the powerful wraith of those four years of the war enters into me, and the torrent becomes the light and clangour of massed guns that thrall the senses.

I take the weight and strength of the barrage, and grow mighty with it, until it becomes but a seam of sound nicked with flashes and puny in space and time controlled by the vast roar of stars in their age-long travail of elemental darkness. I see all life created by those flaming suns of the night, and out of life arises a radiance, wan and phantasmal and pure, the light of Khristos.

The wraith of the war, glimmering with this inner vision, bears me to the wide and shattered country of the Somme, to every broken wood and trench and sunken lane, among the broad, straggling belts of rusty wire, smashed and twisted in the chalky loam, while the ruddy clouds of brickdust hang over the shelled villages by day, and at night the eastern horizon roars and bubbles with light.

And everywhere in these desolate places I see the faces and figures of enslaved men, the marching columns pearl-hued with chalky dust on the

sweat of their heavy drab clothes; the files of carrying parties laden and staggering in the flickering moonlight of gunfire; the "waves" of assaulting troops lying silent and pale on the ledges of the jumping-off places.

Again I crouch with them while the steel glacier rushing by just overhead scrapes away every syllable, every fragment of a message bawled into my ear, while my mind begins to stare fixedly into the bitter dark of imminent death, and my limbs tremble and stiffen as in an icicle, while the gaping, smoking parapet above the rim of my helmet spirits and lashes with machine-gun bullets.

Until in the flame and the rolling smoke I see men arising and walking forward; and I go forward with them, as in a nightmare wherein some seem to pause, with bowed heads, and sink carefully to their knees, and roll slowly over, and lie still. Others roll and roll, and scream and grip my legs in uttermost fear, and I have to struggle to break away, while the dust and earth on my tunic changes from grey to red.

And I go on with aching feet, up and down over ground like a huge ruined honeycomb, and my wave melts away, and the second wave comes up, and also melts away, and then the third wave merges into the ruins of the first and second, and after a while the fourth blunders into the remnants of the others, and we begin to run forward to catch up with the barrage, gasping and sweating, in bunches, anyhow, every bit of the months of drill and rehearsal forgotten, for who could have imagined that the big push was going to be like this?

We come to wire that is uncut, and beyond we see grey coal-scuttle helmets bobbing about, and the ~~sound~~ of over-heated machine-guns wafting away in the fountainous black smoke of howitzer shells; and the loud crackling of the machine-guns changes to a screeching as of steam being blown off by a hundred engines; and soon no one is left standing. And an hour

later our guns are "back on the first objective," and Kitchener's Army, with all its hopes and beliefs, has found its grave on those northern slopes of the Somme battlefield.

A year drifts by, and I am standing on a duckboard by a flooded and foul beck in the Salient, listening in the flare-pallid rainy darkness to the cries of tens of thousands of wounded men lost in the morasses of third Ypres. To seek them is to drown with them... The living are still toiling on, homeless and without horizons, doing dreadful things under heaven that none want to do, through the long wet days and the longer nights, the weeks, the months, of a bare, sodden winter out of doors.

The survivors are worn out; some of them, tested beyond breaking point, put the muzzles of their rifles in their mouths, in the darkness of the terrible nights, and pull the trigger.

Those at home, sitting in armchairs and talking proudly of patriotism and heroism, will never realise the bitter contempt and scorn the soldiers have for these and other abstractions; the soldiers feel they have been betrayed by the high-sounding phrases that heralded the war, for they know that the enemy soldiers are the same men as themselves, suffering and disillusioned in exactly the same way.

And in the stupendous roar and light-blast of the final barrage that broke the Hindenburg line I see only one thing, which grows radiant before my eyes until it fills all my world: the sight of a Saxon boy half crushed under a shattered tank, moaning "Mutter, mutter, mutter," out of ghastly grey lips. A British soldier, wounded in the leg, and sitting nearby, hears the words, and dragging himself to the dying boy, takes his cold hand and says: "All right, son, it's all right. Mother's here with you."

The bells cease ~~to~~ descend again to the world of the living, and move among men whodid not go through the fire, and who think the old thoughts, and who seem not to care that it will happen again unless all believe in the

*(living in some joyful confiding moment, to explain why I want to*

*the past, & the future, all men need to believe together. No one living in the world, the past, or the future, can truly say to me, "I do the best, strongest-best, for myself." They may say with the whole of the past, or, "But they who are weak, & have no nature."*

*of the Passchendaele morasses,*

*2 and the power goes from me; and I see my sons against us and close together, & the world, & the world, & the world,*