

KNIGHTS IN ARMOUR

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Author: Edward S. Woods

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KING ARTHUR From a drawing by L. A. Hume-Williams.

KNIGHTS IN ARMOUR

By EDWARD S. WOODS, M.A
Chaplain of the
Royal Military College, Sandhurst
Author of
"Modern Discipleship and What It Means," etc.

Foreword by
GENERAL SIR WILLIAM ROBERTSON,
K.C.B., K.C.V.O., D.S.O.,
Chief of the Imperial General Staff

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To
Many Officers and Gentlemen Cadets
of the Royal Military College, Sandhurst,
who by unvarying friendliness and goodwill
made easier their Padre's task
this little book
is affectionately dedicated

FOREWORD

A feature of peace manoeuvres used to be the "sham fight." In war there are

no sham fights. One has to deal then with stern realities, and to carry burdens which seem to be quite beyond one's powers to sustain. Especially is this the case with those in the position of leaders. In war, more perhaps than in any other business, men feel the need of something more than the mere knowledge of their profession, no matter how complete that knowledge may be.

I therefore commend this little book to all soldiers, and more particularly to the younger ones, who desire to go into battle properly prepared, for I am satisfied that definite and practical religious convictions form an essential part of every soldier's equipment.

W. R. ROBERTSON.

August 14, 1916.

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INTRODUCTORY

"Be strong in the Lord.... Put on the whole armour of God."—EPHESIANS vi. 10, 11.

"More than conquerors through Him that loved us."—ROMANS viii. 37.

KNIGHTS IN ARMOUR

I

INTRODUCTORY

To every Englishman there is something that stirs the blood and fires the imagination in the ancient legends of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, the legends that Tennyson has immortalized in his *Idylls of the King*. It was a splendid vision that gripped the men who bound themselves—

"To reverence the King, as if He were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no nor listen to it,
To honour his own word as if his God's,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they won her."

Who, if not soldiers, should be the inheritors and transmitters of these noble traditions? The highest meaning of a soldier's vocation has many points of contact with this Knightly ideal; and some of the greatest soldiers of our history have been men who were also Knights of the Cross. Knights are held to higher ideals and charged with harder tasks than lesser men. And for you who serve our English King and are not unmindful of your allegiance to the King of Kings, I would fain try and draw a picture of what Christian Knighthood may mean. I think I see, at the least, four qualities, or virtues, which must needs distinguish a

Christian Knight. These qualities are Courage, Chivalry, Purity, Loyalty.

COURAGE

He who would valiant be
'Gainst all disaster,
Let him in constancy
 Follow the Master.
There's no discouragement
Shall make him once relent
His first avowed intent
 To be a pilgrim.

Who so beset him round
With dismal stories,
Do but themselves confound—
 His strength the more is.
No foes shall stay his might,
Though he with giants fight:
He will make good his right
 To be a pilgrim.

Since, Lord, Thou dost defend
Us with Thy Spirit,
We know we at the end
 Shall life inherit.
Then fancies flee away!
I'll fear not what men say,
I'll labour night and day
 To be a pilgrim.

JOHN BUNYAN.

II

COURAGE

A wounded Highlander was describing one day to his ward Sister, in a burst of confidence, the circumstances in which he was hit. "We were advancing a wee bit through a cornfield and the corn was bonny, thick and tall. Then they turned their machine-guns on us, and I saw the corn cut and flicker, and the men fall and fall! God forgive me! I couldn't face it! ... I turned aside, mem, and I *hid* on my face in the uncut corn."

There was a pause. He moistened his lips with his tongue and went on: "Well, I lay there and lay I there, and I could hear the bullets going swish, swish through the corn. Then something said to me 'Jock! will ye lie here to be shot like a rabbit in the harvest? Get up, and take your dose like a man!' So I got up, mem, and I got it right enough!"[1]

[1] *Time and Talents*, July, 1916, p. 81.

The brave man—and that Scotchman was brave indeed—is not necessarily a man who doesn't feel fear; he is one who doesn't yield to it. Even that hero General Gordon used to say he felt afraid when in action. Most of us would like to run away; but most manage, somehow, to "stick it out." There are other situations where it is just as important, and almost as difficult, to "stick it out" as in a shell-plagued trench. There is another War on hand, and the man who takes his place on this front will need all the pluck that he can muster.

It is useless to disguise the fact that to be a Christian means you are in for a fight—and a stiff one at that. Some people seem to think of the Christian religion as if it were a kind of Sunday Club, or a rest cure, or a mutual benefit society. But Christianity is not a passive thing at all. If you are going to be a Christian you have got to take sides in the eternal war of Right against Wrong; and a man cannot take sides without taking hard knocks too. We sometimes speak of War as if it were a kind of great game. Here is the greatest Game of all. And, as a Christian, you are not spectator, linesman or referee: you are one of the team; and it's "up to" you to strip and get going and play the game for all you are worth.

And what of the fight? Who is the enemy, and how are we to fight him? You won't need field glasses to see his front line. "A soldier's first and last battle

is with himself” The enemy outside owes much of his strength and success to his traitorous ally within the gates. Many a man’s worst foe is in his own heart and life. There are things that start from within, habits of thought or word or deed, which definitely militate against a man being a true Knight and a Christian gentleman. There can be no truce with these things. The Christian Knight has got to stand up against them. And if he feels—and who does not?—that he is woefully lacking in the needed strength and courage, then let him turn once more to the living Son of God, Who alone can make weak men strong, and Who loves to do it.

But the man who wants to “fight the good fight with all his might” is called to tilt against the evil without as well as the evil within. It is a caricature of Christianity which makes it out to be simply a provision for each man to save his own skin and qualify for heaven. Christ did indeed come to save men; but He did it, not to ensure their personal safety and exempt them from fighting, but to enlist them for ever on the side of God and Righteousness. The dimensions and issues of *this* War are such as to demand the utmost from every Christian soldier. On all sides of us Evil is everywhere entrenched, and in positions that often seem impregnable; his worldwide forces are knit in close alliance, and fight with the veteran skill of age-long experience. Here in the England that we love, in any town, or village, in any school or regiment, on any day, the Enemy is visibly, incessantly striving to work grievous hurt on our manhood and womanhood. Who, if not Knights of the Cross, shall withstand him and fight him to the death? William Blake’s well-known lines might well serve as a motto for the Christian soldier:

”I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England’s green and pleasant land.”

There is, in this campaign, no question of travelling to some distant theatre of operations, nor of waiting for a selected moment. You begin at once, and just where you are. Perhaps that is why the fighting needs some stiff courage. ”To ride *abroad* redressing human wrongs” would have all the glamour of a great adventure. But to strike a blow for Truth and Right, and keep lifted high the Colours of the King of Kings, in your own immediate circle, where you know the others and the others know you—that needs real grit. All the more because if you do that you may easily find yourself alone. Most people make no attempt to swim against the stream, they float down with it. The line of least resistance,

and the path of popularity, are barred to the Christian Knight. As *Christian* said to *By-ends* in the *Pilgrim's Progress*: "If you will go with us, you must go against Wind and Tide: you must also own Religion in his rags, as well as when in his silver slippers; and stand by him too when bound in irons, as well as when he walketh the streets with applause."

"The Son of God goes forth to war,
A Kingly crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar!
Who follows in His train?"

Again and again, in Flanders, in Gallipoli, and on every front, courage has shown itself to be a contagious thing. Fired by an undaunted leader, cheered by stout hearts at his side, many a man has proved himself braver than he ever thought to be. In one of his campaigns the Duke of Wellington happened, on one occasion, to be absent from the army and rode up just as it was retreating. A soldier saw him and shouted out, "Yonder is Lord Wellington. God bless him." The shout was taken up by the whole force; the retreating army was inspired to a fresh effort, turned and drove the enemy headlong. Jesus Christ has a like effect on those who get near enough to Him to feel the magic of His influence. It just makes you a *man* to be in His company.

"I have a Captain,
And the heart of every valiant man
Has drunk in valour from His eyes
Since first the War began.
He is most merciful in fight.
And of His scars a single sight
The embers of our failing might
Into a flame can fan."

CHIVALRY

"He saved others: Himself He cannot save."—ST. MATTHEW xxvii. 42.

"Ye ought to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."—ACTS xx. 35.

"Follow the Christ, the King,
Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the king—
Else, wherefore born?"—TENNYSON.

III CHIVALRY

In the Middle Ages the lesser nobles used to follow their chiefs on horseback; they were called *Knights* (the word originally meant servants, in German *Knechte*) and the system of knightly rules and customs was called chivalry (French *chevalerie*). The order of knighthood was only bestowed after many years of training and discipline. In later times the movement lost its early meaning and usefulness; but for many centuries the traditions and ideals of knighthood did much to keep alive the Christian standard of a pure and courageous manhood.

On one of the last days of His earthly life Jesus Christ did a thing that astounded the men who saw it. At the close of a supper with the inner circle of His followers, He took water and a towel and went round the little company washing each man's feet in turn. And then He explained to them His acted parable. He told them that they, like Himself, were put in the world to *serve*: "not to be ministered unto but to minister." They learnt their lesson; and for the rest of their lives every man, save one, spent himself ungrudgingly in serving others.

The word knight, as we saw, means "servant"; and it is not for nothing that the Army and Navy are called "The Services." Taught by stern discipline, the soldier and the sailor know that self counts nothing, and others everything. That is perhaps the biggest truth in life. Many people had forgotten it before the War; but we have learnt it now. That great host who have laid down their lives for their friends, and those countless others who have learnt to hold the nation dearer than safety and comfort, than pleasure and money—all these have shown it to be startlingly true that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things that he possesseth; and that it is verily "more blessed to give than to receive." Chivalry is re-born; Honour has come to its own again. As that young poet sang so truly and beautifully, shortly before he gave his own life:[1]

[1] Rupert Brooke died in the Aegean, April, 1915, aged 28. From *1914 and Other Poems*.

”Blow out, you bugles, over the rich Dead!
 There’s none of these so lonely and poor of old,
 But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.
 These laid the world away; poured out the red
 Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be
 Of work and joy, and that unhoped serene,
 That men call age; and those who would have been,
 Their sons, they gave, their immortality.

”Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our dearth,
 Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and Pain.
 Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,
 And paid his subjects with a royal wage;
 And Nobleness walks in our ways again;
 And we have come into our heritage.”

True knights are called to chivalrous service, not in war-time only, or just for a temporary Cause, but always, and everywhere, on behalf of all. If Christians generally lived up to this Christian ideal, and cared little for *getting*, but everything for *giving*, the world would rapidly become a very different place. Selfishness is the cause of nearly all our ills; and chivalry is just the opposite of selfishness. There is no chivalry in the man who is wrapped up in his own affairs, and who turns a cold eye on all except his own particular friends. It is chivalry that makes you interested in that other fellow who happens to be less fortunately situated than yourself, and sets you wondering how you would like it if you were in his shoes, until at last you feel you must somehow find some way of being a friend to him and giving him a helping hand. And it is chivalry that is always on the watch to protect the defenceless. In every group of people, in all sections of society, there are always some individuals who seem curiously unable to fend for themselves and invariably get pushed to the wall. Do you do your share in the general pushing? Or do you, with Christian chivalry, try and stand up for those who cannot or do not stand up for themselves?

The chivalrous man, moreover, is never unfair nor unmerciful. War-time makes a big demand on the qualities of fairness and mercy. Thank God our Nation has, on the whole, and despite terrible provocation, shown itself to be a chivalrous foe to the enemy. If you are going to be chivalrous, there is no room for vengeance

or retaliation. Soldiers and sailors know this by instinct, and act accordingly. I always notice that it is newspaper people, and people who sit snug in their arm-chairs at home, who talk so loud about reprisals and retaliation. In the trenches it's quite different. When Thomas Atkins takes a prisoner he generally offers him a cigarette. As an Officer said the other day, "Tommy's only idea, when he catches these fellows, is to feed them." At least that is his usual practice, whatever his theories are about what he will do to the "blanked Hun" when he catches him. A recent number of *Punch* *[2] had a lovely description of Thomas Atkins' vengeance. *A Cavalry outpost in Egypt, sweltering in the heat, devoured by mosquitoes, in a temper reflecting the choice surroundings, decides that the only thing to do with wandering parties of the treacherous Arabs is to shoot them at sight. Sudden report from the sentry: "Corporal, I can see 'alf-a-dozen of them blighters coming along about a mile away. Shall I give 'em one?" "No, you idiot," says the Corporal, "Let's 'ave a look at 'em first." There arrives on the scene a middle-aged Arab, dressed in indescribable rags, and in the last stage of exhaustion, and decidedly populous as to his person; various members of his family are hovering about a short distance away. He falls flat on his face at the sight of the Corporal, crying, "Bimbashi, bimbashi, mongeries, mongeries." "Yes, I'll bash yer all right," says the Corporal, "Grey-'eaded old reprobate, you ought to know better." "Lor'," comments one of the Troopers, "'e do look thin, pore beggar, *Mongeries—that means food, don't it? 'E looks as if 'e hadn't eaten nothing for weeks. 'Ere, 'ave a biscuit, old Sport." "Try 'im with some bully," suggests another Trooper; "they say they won't eat that, though." "Won't 'e!" says the first, "I never seen the stuff go so quick. 'Ere, old fellow, don't eat the tin." "Don't give him any more," says the Corporal, "or 'e'll kill 'isself. Let's see if his family can do the disappearing trick as quick as he can. Poor devils they've been through something. 'Ere, you family, mongeries." The family are brought up and fed on the day's rations. "Take 'em back to camp now," orders the Corporal, "and 'and 'em over. Come on, old boy; you're all right. Lor', ain't they pretty near done. Lucky they found us when they did." Such is the way of Thomas ... and it is the way of chivalry; and that is the way of Christ. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink."*

Another mark of the chivalrous man is the stainless honour of all his relations with women. In the days of our fathers and grandfathers it was thought very important that the relations between men and women should always be what was called "proper," with the result that they often became self-conscious, stilted, affected, and even stupid. In our day there is a strong reaction against those Victorian ideas and manners. This reaction is very natural, and much of it is sane and sound. The relation between the sexes to-day is often that of a healthy, happy, easy comradeship, born of sport or some other rational joint interest, a thing of the open air, metaphorically as well as literally. And there are

many men who have cause to bless a blameless friendship with a good woman. But if some profit by this new liberty, others, it must be confessed, have shown themselves less worthy of it. It is all too easy for the man of to-day to fall below the standard which is planted in the conscience and instinct of every true gentleman. There is much—too much—in modern life to make men think that women are in the world just to minister to their amusement and gratification, and to make women acquiesce in that idea. There are those who deliberately give effect to that degraded conception. There are others who, without descending to vice, have half-unconsciously allowed their thought of the man and woman relationship to be lowered and coarsened. Influenced by the presentment of life which they see at most theatres and cinemas, and in a certain type of novel, they learn to think of love as something easy, exciting, pleasurable, irresponsible, unfettered by ordinary restraints, something to be gazed at, feasted on, dissected, toyed with; and so perhaps they come to play with love in their own experience, and thus both work grievous hurt on other lives, and, for themselves, fritter away in little bits, cheaply and unthinkingly, that which is the very highest thing in all the capacity and heritage of their manhood. Far otherwise is it with the man who is mindful of the dictates of true chivalry. His whole thought of womanhood is on a different level, breathes another atmosphere. For him, Love is a high and holy thing, to be revered, not played with. For him, all that womanhood is and may be, the tender grace and charm, the beauty of form and face, the appeal of her dependence, the subtle surprises of her companionship, the ministries of her sympathy, the wonder of her friendship, the selfless glory of her love—all this he sees to be God's sheer gift for the blessing of humanity. Something of this vision, this instinct, will be at the back of his mind in all his contact with the women he knows and sees. And, therefore, his one guiding principle as he meets and mixes with them will be—*reverence*. A deep reverence for womanhood is the hall-mark of true chivalry.

[2] May 10, 1916.

Does this seem an impossibly high standard for a man who has to live his life in modern society? Perhaps it would be out of reach of us ordinary men, if it were not for a new and mighty spiritual stimulus which, if we will, we may make our own. The secret of chivalry, like the secret of courage, may be learned in the companionship of the one perfect chivalrous Gentleman that the world has seen—Jesus of Nazareth. He, born of a human mother, acquainted with family love. Friend of gentle women, for ever blessed and sanctified the friendship and love

of men and women. From the Manger to the Cross He lived out and taught the first law of all chivalry, the great guiding principle of all human relationships, the highest glory both of manhood and womanhood, that it is ever more blessed to give than to receive. As Charles Kingsley, himself a most chivalrous gentleman, sung of his Master in lines noble and true:

”He taught mankind on that first Christmas Day
What ’twas to be a man; to give, not take;
To serve, not rule; to nourish, not devour;
To help, not crush; if need to die, not live.”

[image]

*SIR GALAHAD Photo F. Hollyer G. F. Watts, R.A. by permission of
Mrs. Watts*

PURITY

”And I saw ... and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True... And His armies followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.”—REV. xix. 11, 14.

”Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?”—1 COR. vi. 19.

God who created me
 Nimble and light of limb,
In three elements free,
 To run, to ride, to swim:
Not when the sense is dim,
 But now from the heart of joy,
I would remember Him:
 Take the thanks of a boy.

Jesu, King and Lord,

Whose are my foes to fight.
 Gird me with Thy sword,
 Swift and sharp and bright.
 Thee would I serve if I might;
 And conquer if I can.
 From day-dawn till night,
 Take the strength of a man.

Spirit of Love and Truth,
 Breathing in grosser clay,
 The light and flame of youth.
 Delight of men in the fray.
 Wisdom in strength's decay;
 From pain, strife, wrong to be free.
 This best gift I pray,
 Take my spirit to Thee.—HENRY CHARLES BEECHING

IV PURITY

One of the old legends of King Arthur and his Knights concerns that which men called the "Holy Grail." The story ran that the Holy Grail, which was the cup used at Christ's last supper with His disciples, was treasured carefully by Joseph of Arimathaea and brought by him, ultimately, to Glastonbury.

"And there awhile it abode; and if a man
 Could touch or see it, he was healed at once,
 By faith, of all his ills. But then the times
 Grew to such evil that the holy cup
 Was caught away to heaven and disappeared."

Later, in the days of King Arthur, the vision of the cup returned again. It was a memorable day. The seat at the Round Table, the "Siege Perilous," left ever empty for the coming of one who should, be worthy to sit therein, was filled at last by the young and fair and pure Sir Galahad, brought thither by the "ancient clothed

in white." He was clad in white armour, with no sword or shield save only an empty scabbard hanging by his side. Thereupon the second marvel of that day took place. The fair sword, stuck fast in the great stone of red marble, which no other Knight had been able to move, was lightly and easily drawn by Sir Galahad, who said as he took it, "For the surety of this sword I brought none with me; for here by my side hangeth the scabbard." That same evening, after even-song in the great minster at Camelot, they were all at supper in Arthur's Hall. "And all at once," runs the old legend, retold in Tennyson's verse,

"And all at once, as there we sat, we heard
A cracking and a riving of the roofs,
And rending, and a blast, and overhead
Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.
And in the blast there smote along the hall
A beam of light seven times more clear than day.
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail
All over cover'd with a luminous cloud,
And none might see who bare it, and it past.
But every Knight beheld his fellow's face
As in a glory, and all the Knights arose...."

All saw the light, and heard the sounds, but Sir Galahad alone had sight of the Grail itself. Whereupon all the rest took solemn vows to ride a twelvemonth and a day in quest of it. And the legend goes on to tell how they fared and what adventures they had in their quest.

It is a beautiful and significant story. G.F. Watts, the artist, caught the spirit of it in his well-known picture of Sir Galahad standing by his white horse, with purity of vision and strength of high resolve written on every line of his uplifted face. Both legend and picture seem to catch and illumine an idea that was fundamental in the whole conception of Knighthood, the idea that the true Knight must be pure in heart. Sir Galahad stands forth as the type and embodiment of strong and pure manhood.

Sermons on sin and exhortations to holiness may leave us cold, but this Knightly ideal carries an appeal that is permanent and powerful; it cannot fail to find some response in the heart of anyone who is a real man. For the point is that Sir Galahad, with all his purity, was no milksop, no untempted saint; he was uncommonly strong in the right arm, as other men found to their cost. But there was, and is always, a deep-down connexion between what a man is and what he does. A man's whole life is the product and expression of the real quality of the

hidden self. The nature of the tree determines the fruit. The question of purity has its roots in these secret places of a man's being that lie hid from any human eye. "There is nothing," insisted Christ, "from without a man that entering into him can defile him, but the things which come out of him, from within, out of the heart ... those are they that defile the man." [1]

[1] St. Mark vii. 15, 21.

Psychologists tell us that below the level of our conscious thought there are large subterranean places where the things we hear and read and think about are being stored up. The things that come up to the surface, whether we produce them voluntarily—'remember' them, or whether they come up unbidden when our upper minds are empty and receptive, naturally are of the stock that is stored below. What sort of stock are you accumulating in your mental underground? What sort of pictures hang in the most private galleries of your mind? What kind of thoughts come floating up from those mysterious depths, and what are the thoughts that you most enjoy thinking? There is many a man who is often visited by thoughts that he would rather be without; they seem to catch on to some part of him that has a sneaking liking for them, and he cannot dislodge these unwelcome guests. He is almost conscious of a sort of dual personality: part of him wants what is clean and good, but the rest of him seems a very odd mixture which he is powerless to regulate or alter. He feels that he would make a better affair of life if only all the parts of him would push together in the right direction. Is there any way of achieving such a state of affairs? I know of no other certain way but one. There is only one power I ever heard of that could plumb the depths of a human soul and transform the quality of all the stuff that lies down there, and clean out all the refuse, and stiffen the dethroned will and put it back in its place of power—and that is the "Spirit" of Jesus Christ. It is said of the great John Nicholson, that wonderful leader of men, that, however desperate the circumstances, his presence could put new heart into a whole camp. It is just that, with yet deeper result, that Christ does for those who trust Him. He told His followers that if they would open their hearts to receive Him, He would give them His Spirit; by which He meant that, inspired by His influence, they would actually become like Him, and think His thoughts, and will His will, and live the kind of life He lived. What He said would happen *does happen*; and not just "Saints" but ordinary people find that *He* can make them true and pure in a way that nothing else can.

”Spirit of purity and grace.
 Our weakness pitying see;
 Oh make our hearts Thy dwelling place
 And worthier Thee.”

Those words contain not a beautiful aspiration but a literal possibility.

Once a man begins to make this great discovery, all sorts of results ensue. Lost things are found again, among them that happy, guileless certainty of God which is childhood’s heritage and which so often slips away when men grow older. Life gets crowded and men lose sight of God; some men even think He is not there because they have lost the knack of looking for Him. If you cannot see properly through a telescope it is rash to conclude that the object you are looking for is not there; it would be better to clean the lens. It is not God who deserts us; it is we who, blinded by sin, miss Him. ”Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Here again it is not the ”Saints” only who are gifted with this capacity for spiritual vision. It is the birthright of every man and woman born into the world. The path of purity is a right of way, and the place of vision has no fences round it; all who will may enter there, and there is none to forbid them but themselves. I believe there are numbers of men who have a dim consciousness of these great possibilities but who, from one cause or another, have never really begun to explore them. The one thing needful, for many a man, is simply that he should *give his soul a chance*. Early in the War there was killed in France at the age of twenty, a man of brilliant endowments and high promise—Charles Sorley, of Marlborough and University College, Oxford. A few months before his death he wrote these lines, which put into winged words this haunting sense of unexplored spiritual possibilities,—

”From morn to midnight, all day through,
 I laugh and play as others do,
 I sin and chatter just the same
 As others with a different name.

And all year long upon the stage
 I dance and tumble and do rage
 So vehemently, I scarcely see
 The inner and eternal me.

I have a temple I do not
 Visit, a heart I have forgot,
 A self that I have never met,

A secret shrine—and yet, and yet

This sanctuary of my soul
Unwitting I keep white and whole,
Unlatched and lit, if Thou should'st care
To enter or to tarry there.

With parted lips and outstretched hands
And listening ears Thy servant stands;
Call Thou early, call Thou late,
To Thy great service dedicate.”

The War is creating a hunger for reality, and above all for spiritual reality.

”Break me, O God, destroy me if you will, but save me from self-complacency and little interests and little successes and the life that passes as the shadows of a dream.”

If purity is the condition of vision, it is also the secret of strength.

”My strength is as the strength of ten
Because my heart is pure.”

Sir Galahad had made the discovery which true men always make. Sin is a source of weakness. Purity is a fount of strength. Unclean men are never conquerors—they have lost the first and most important of battles, that with themselves. It was not for nothing that Lord Kitchener emphasized the supreme importance of self control in his famous letter to the troops at the beginning of the War. ”Success in War,” says the Field Service Regulations, ”depends more on the moral than on the physical qualities.” Foremost among moral forces is that wonderful thing, all powerful though difficult to define, which men call *discipline*. Of the many qualities which make up discipline, there is one of unrivalled importance, which it partly evokes and partly creates, and that is self-control. It is of the essence of discipline that a man should learn entirely to subordinate his own wish or pleasure or safety to a larger common purpose. Standing in the ranks he must control the desire to move his head or fidget with his hands. In the face of the enemy he must control his desire to run away. At all times and in all places he must control his desire to consult his own comfort or convenience. Such self-control involves a considerable measure of moral strength. Will a man be strong here, where strength is so needed, if all the while he is gravely weak in the region of his inner life? Is it likely that he will be able to inspire others with cheerful

fortitude in face of hardships and death if the very source is fouled whence his own strength must be drawn?

With all possible emphasis I would press this point upon you, that there is a vital connexion between purity and moral strength. And I urge it, not simply for your own sakes, but even more because of what you may be and do for others. "For their sakes I consecrate myself." The motive of that one perfect life is the only adequate motive for us who try to be His followers. How can I serve others, if my own soul is shackled in iron bonds? How can I fight for righteousness, in this War or in the Greater War, if in my own heart and life I have secret dealings with the enemy?

The Knights of Christ are men who have no use for dirt of any kind. "And I beheld a white horse, and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make War ... and the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." [2] There is nothing so unclean but that Christ can cleanse it; and to all who would be His Warriors He can, and He does, give the white armour which they must have. Here is the greatest soldiering of all. It is worth the struggle to be a better man, it is worth the effort of faith which will let Him re-make your life, if thereby you may be fit to take your place in His Army and go after Him as He rides forth to conquer in the Holy War.

[2] Revelation xix. 11, 14.

LOYALTY

"Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven."—ST. MATTHEW vii. 21.

"Be Thou the King, and we will work Thy will Who Love Thee."—TENNYSON.

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His Kingdom stretch from shore to shore,

Till moons shall wax and wane no more.”—ISAAC WATTS.

V LOYALTY

The Coronation Service of His Majesty King George V. is still a comparatively recent event. The whole ceremony is, as many will remember, full of beautiful symbolism. One of the most moving and dramatic moments is that when, after the King has been crowned, his chief subjects come forward to kneel down and do him homage. One after another the Archbishops, the Princes of the Blood Royal and the Peers of the Realm, kneel down, putting off their coronets, and pronounce the words of homage: "I do become your liege man of life and limb, and of earthly worship; and faith and truth I will bear unto you, to live and die, against all manner of folks. So help me God." And then, proceeds the rubric, "the Peers having done their Homage, the first of each Order, putting off his coronet, shall singly ascend the throne, and stretching forth his hand, touch the Crown on His Majesty's head, as promising by that ceremony for himself and his Order to be ever ready to support it with all their power; and then shall he kiss the King's cheek." This sense of owing loyal service to a King is an immemorial instinct in men. And it is a deep-rooted tradition that those who are his "Knights" are bound to him in the closest ties of honourable obligation. In the earliest centuries of our national history the King used to have his "war band," bound personally to him by their free choice, and sworn to fight for him to the death. He was their "lord," they his "thegns."

Most of us call ourselves "Christians." Have you realized that to be a Christian, in the true sense of the word, means nothing less than that you are Christ's "liege man of life and limb," and that you are utterly committed "faith and truth to bear unto Him, to live and die, against all manner of folks?" This personal devotion to the living Christ is the most central thing in Christianity. If a man is going to be a real Christian it will mean more than just assenting to the Creed, and going to Church, and "feeling religious" at favourable moments. It will mean entering into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and letting Him be in command, not on specified occasions, but every day and all the time. The difficulty with many people is that Christianity only touches the circumference of their existence and never seems to get established right at the centre of heart and life. It simply makes the whole difference when once you discover that Jesus Christ is

a real Person Who, on His side, is interested in you and loves to help you and go about with you, and Whom you, on your side, can talk to and lean on and, gradually, begin to love. It is always in this personal way that God in Christ offers Himself to men. He is the Redeemer Who will release you from the iron bonds of sin, the Friend Who will stand by your side, the King Who would have your loyal service. And, in order to break for good and all the power of sin and death, and that He might found His Kingdom on the free loyalty of love, *He died*.... It is a common thing for men to lay down their lives for king and country; but here is a King dying for His subjects. Have you ever tried to realize what *sin* means? It must mean at least this: that when you and I do wrong we are doing something that hurts God, something that inevitably puts a barrier between Him and us. And is it not premature to speak of love and loyalty to Him as long as that barrier is there? Now, however amazing it may seem, there has proved to be no other way but one in which that barrier could be utterly and finally broken down—and God chose that way, the way of the Cross. Deliberately, gladly, the Son of God *died*. That which is a lasting puzzle to theologians and philosophers, is just sheer good tidings, and tidings found to be true, to ordinary people who are hungry in soul. I always think that at once the simplest and profoundest statement of the meaning of the death of Christ is that contained in the old children's hymn:

"He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good;
That we might go at last to heaven,
Saved by His precious blood."

Can we withhold our loyalty from Him Who stands before us, not only as a King demanding our rightful allegiance, but as One Who loves us so much that He died for us?

"Were the whole realm of Nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so Divine
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

Once you get fairly hold of this idea of Christianity being largely a matter of personal loyalty to Jesus Christ, then your "religion" will begin to become alive in all sorts of unsuspected ways. Prayer will cease to be a more or less formal duty which you hardly like to give up, and will become instead a real intercourse with God which you find you cannot do without. The Bible, too, will no longer

be, what it too often is, a mere adjunct of conventional religion, but will become instead a living book, a book which makes you see, as nothing else can, the mind and character and purposes of the King you are trying to serve. Public worship will be a pleasure instead of a bore, because you have discovered its point and meaning. And the Holy Communion, instead of being either a religious "extra" beyond your reach or else an occasional effort out of touch with your ordinary life, will take its place as an indispensable means of bringing new life to your soul, as a wonderful pledge of His amazing love and of all that you long to give Him in response.

Now there are two things which this loyalty to the King of Kings will necessarily involve. To be loyal to Him will mean being loyal to the Christian Brotherhood and loyal to the Christian Cause. Loyalty to a brotherhood is a thing that should come naturally to a soldier, or indeed to anyone who has imbibed the highest traditions of our Public Schools and Universities and Services. "Comradeship," says a soldier who ought to know, "Comradeship is the saving characteristic of the British Army." A man has learnt one of the greatest lessons of life when he realizes that the honour of the Regiment is of far greater moment than his own personal success, than his life even. As a senior subaltern said to a junior brother officer, when giving him some homely advice on the day that he passed his recruits' drills and was finally "off the square":—"All that you've got to remember is that it's the Regiment which counts; and you've got to make yourself a credit to it." [1] Again and again in this war it has been shown what a wonderful force there is in this Regimental *esprit de corps*. There can be no doubt—to cite one instance only—that this spirit, this tradition, was a vital factor in the glorious achievements of the immortal 29th Division at Gallipoli.

[1] "The Making of an Officer." *The Times*, June 8, 1916.

"It's the Regiment which counts." The Christian Church could do with more of this spirit of mutual loyalty. We are "members one of another," urged St. Paul; and yet how little there is of real brotherliness among us Christians! When we find a man is a fellow-Christian, whatever his social position may be, we ought to have that kind of feeling towards him that we should have if he had been at our school, or belonged to our Regiment. There is no free-masonry like that which links together those who have a common love for Jesus Christ and a common interest in His purposes. Moreover, this sense of being one of a great Brotherhood is a spiritual safeguard and incentive. When you and I fail, it is not just our own Christianity that suffers: we are "letting down" the whole Brotherhood, we

are lowering great and immemorial traditions, we are proving unworthy of the unnumbered multitude of Christian heroes who, in every generation, have fought the good light of faith. "Therefore, surrounded as we are by such a vast cloud of witnesses let us fling aside every encumbrance and the sin that so readily entangles our feet, and let us run with patient endurance the race that lies before us, fixing our gaze on Jesus our Prince Leader in the Faith." [2]

[2] Hebrews xii 1, 2. *Weymouth's Version*.

Any genuine loyalty to our "Prince Leader" carries with it, of necessity, loyalty to His Cause. I have said something, in a previous Chapter, about the call to Christians to do some fighting in the real Holy War. I would urge, once more, that the true Knight of Christ cannot do less than place himself, and all that he has, at the disposal of his Master's Cause.

"A Christian," says a recent writer, "is one who believes in *and supports* the claim of Christ to universal Sovereignty." Christ needs men who will spend themselves in His Cause with the same splendid devotion that men show when they are fighting for their country. In the recent advance, [3] as the Newfoundland Regiment was pushing along through a storm of lead, a corporal turned to the man by his side and said, "If I go down you take charge and go straight ahead." A minute afterwards a bullet hit him in the chest and he dropped. The man he had spoken to tried to lift him up, but he was done for, and his last words were "Push on with it."

[3] July, 1916.

Those words might serve as a motto for all those who are beginning to see that the greatest Enterprise of all, and one most worth serving, is that of extending the Kingdom of God over the face of the whole earth. The time is ripe indeed for a general Christian offensive. The war has laid bare, as never before, the moral need of the world, and now is the opportunity to begin afresh the task of giving men Christianity, and to "*push on with it*." It is to a mighty Adventure, with big risks and great sacrifices, that Christ is calling us; and that is the kind of call that a real man always loves to hear. At the supreme crisis of his fortunes, after the capitulation of Rome, Garibaldi, the Saviour of Italy, called for volunteers to go after him. "I am going out from Rome," he cried; "I offer neither quarters,

nor provisions, nor wages. I offer hunger, thirst, forced marches, battles, death. Let him who loves his country with his heart, not with his lips only, follow me." And men streamed out after him into the hills. That is the spirit in which Christ summons men to serve *His Cause*. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross daily, and follow Me." And the curious thing is that when men at last cut loose from a snug religion and fling themselves with a certain recklessness into the service of Christ and His Kingdom, then they begin to taste the real joy of life. As at a Coronation, as soon as the homage is accomplished, the trumpets blow. When a man, at whatever cost, "does his bit" in a mighty enterprise, then he begins to enjoy "the top of the fulness of life." In one of the battles of history, when in an advance a soldier was mortally wounded, a comrade bent over him and cheered him with the tidings, "They have taken the position: the flag is planted on it." A film was on the eyes of the dying man, and he could see nothing; but with a smile on his face he murmured, "I helped to put it there." Will you and I be able to say that when the flag of the triumphant Christ is unfurled in His final victory?

"And the King sat
Crown'd on the dais, and his warriors cried,
'Be Thou the King, and we will work Thy will
Who love Thee.'"

Have you taken these vows? Christ the King would have your services and make you His Knight. He *wants* you, for Himself and for His Cause. To be wanted by Jesus Christ—who can hold back from a call such as that?

"He hath sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat,
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment-seat;
Oh! be swift, my soul, to answer Him, be jubilant, my feet:
Our God is marching on!"

A PRAYER
OF S. RICHARD OF CHICHESTER
1240 A.D.

Thanks be to Thee, my Lord Jesus Christ
For all the benefits which Thou hast given me,

For all the pains and insults, which Thou hast borne for me.
O most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother,
May I know Thee more clearly,
Love Thee more dearly,
And follow Thee more nearly. Amen.

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