

The White Ribbon

FOR GOD AND HOME AND HUMANITY

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THE COST OF FREEDOM.

Courage is of two kinds—active and passive—the courage that does great things, which at its lowest is closely allied to foolhardiness, but which follows an upward path through all the manifestations of bravery, until it reaches the heights of conscious and deliberate self-sacrifice; and there finds that

"The toppling crags of duty scaled
Are close beside those shining table-lands,
Of which our God Himself is moon
and sun."

Also there is the courage which endures greatly, that sounds every note of an ascending scale from the calm fatalism that endures because it must, and touches lightly each tone of Patience, till it reaches the clear ringing note of Victory, when self-subdued, it cries with triumphant faith, "I delight to **endure** Thy will, O, my Father."

During the past two years thousands of young men in this Dominion have shown us one kind of courage—courage in action. They, when Duty sounded her bugle-call, "rescue the oppressed"; when Freedom tapped her drum and cried, "Save me," flew to obey the call. When the German War Lords set out to teach the world that "Might is Right"; when they solved to overturn the effect of centuries of Christian civilisation; to reduce Europe to a condition of barbarism, where force is the only law, where terrorism is reduced to a sys-

tem; to set at defiance every international law; to decorate the murderers of innocent women and children; to break every law, human and Divine, and to justify the use of every means by which Europe could be brought beneath the iron heel of Prussian militarism; when Germany resolved to win the world even at the price of her soul; then little Belgium threw herself across the track of the invading horde, and looking across the "narrow streak of blue" to "Freedom's own little island," cried, "Help, or I perish." The British Lion lay dozing in the sun, the Germans thought him sleeping, but at the first sound of distress he sprang to his feet with a roar, and "from the four corners of the earth the lion's cubs came tearing forth." We in these far-off isles heard the call, and our boys responded nobly to it. They came from farm and orchard; from lonely bush and city desk; from the plough and the loom; from school and college; from the teacher's desk and the professor's chair; from pulpit, and from printing-press; leaving home and loved ones, they went to the camp, to the troopship, and the battlefield. Many have gone to hospital, some to death, and some have returned to us bearing witness, by their scarred bodies and their shattered nerves, to the fierceness of the ordeal through which they have passed.

But courage as lofty in quality, though of a different kind, has been shown during this long period by wives and mothers. Mothers gave their boys to fight for freedom; mothers who knew the value of the

gift (for no one knows the cost of human life as mothers know it). Brave boys have gone to fight; brave women have stayed at home to work and pray for them. Never has this courage been tested as in this last two weeks. Not even in the darkest days at Gallipoli have we had to scan such long lists of casualties, containing the names of hundreds who died on the field of honour, and of thousands who lie wounded and broken in the hospitals of Northern France. Our deepest sympathy goes out to all those bereaved ones. The boys left us with all the light-heartedness of youth, their letters show not only how the crucible of suffering developed the best in them, but also a depth of feeling and breadth of view that surprises even those who knew them best. What were they fighting for? The British Empire? Ay, and more than this. The British Empire stands for all we hold most dear: freedom; righteousness; justice to weaker nations; protection to the dark-skinned races.

With all its faults—and they are many and grievous—yet the British Empire approaches more nearly than any other to the Christian ideal. The boys who went from our churches and Sunday Schools felt that they were fighting for the upholding of God's cause on earth. "Whoso layeth down his life for My sake and the Gospels," said the Great Master, and many a life is as truly laid down for God on the battlefield as on the mission field. "I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword," words from the same Divine lips, teach us