

**REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY:  
IN MEMORY OF THOSE WHO HAVE DIED IN WAR  
The former Choristers of the Temple Church, 1914-18**

The Revd William Henry Draper, Rector of Adel near Leeds, in a book of his poems published in 1414, included “The Two Banners, 1914”: the banner of Hate; and the banner of Love. First for hate:

Can they who their own honour flout, who throw  
Truth to the winds, who openly defy  
Justice and mercy, and who serve a lie, -  
Can such as these, and Love, together grow?

And then, the banner of love:

Rouse! England, rouse thyself! And to the skies  
Unfurl thy nobler banner, make to sound  
Freedom’s high trumpet-call that shall confound  
Those hosts that threaten all men’s liberties.  
Mark how they strive to silence truth with lies,  
To trample on a world with iron bound,  
To crush thyself and France down to the ground,  
To make all Europe a mere Prussian prize.  
Therefore forgive them not. But from all lands  
Call thine allies, and let the Prussian know  
One Adversary in the pathway stands  
Of insolence, one unrelenting foe,  
Who seeing Pride and Tyranny shake hands  
Marches with all the world to lay them low.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The book included as well a poem, “A Song of the English Children”; its refrain is “What can I do for England,/ that does so much for me?” A year later Draper furthered the theme in *Courage! Or The Days of our Fathers: a record and remembrance of the spirit of Great Britain 100 years ago* – during the Napoleonic War, a far longer conflict than the Great War, a year old, had yet been. The book’s motto: “Heroes! For instant sacrifice prepared.”

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Here in the Temple too the War drew an instant response. The former choristers had a society, the “Templars’ Union”.<sup>2</sup> It had been formed in 1908, with aspirations of its time. “Do we desire to play a good innings for God and England before we die? *We do.*” On 14 August a Special War Meeting was held. Two men arrived already in uniform. Dr Henry Walford Davies, the organist, declared that this was the War to end War, and urged every member of the Union to enlist or – if that was not possible – to find another form of active service. By the beginning of October, sixteen members had joined up. Frederick Durno-Stahlschmidt changed his name to Steele. The Union’s magazine – which would be issued irregularly throughout the War – called for enlistment too. Was it “business as usual”? No! Acknowledging that some must stay at home – although “it is perfectly exasperating to have to do unimportant things when so many important things are afoot” – the author insists “the business of the nation, particularly of the young nation, is elsewhere, and all who can, should get about it at once.”

Frank Hastwell in the London Scottish was soon writing to the Union from France: “I do hope that by this time next year this murder will have passed, so that I shall be able to say these things personally. I am jolly glad the shortest day is passed, as night in the trenches is absolutely vile as you are absolutely unable to see your hand in front of your face. Do you know, that at the end of the fifth day there was hardly a tree standing owing to the enemy’s terrific shell-fire and of course our rifle fire...One of

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Our countrymen then had a good cause, and in quietness and confidence they faced danger and did not flinch from death. They believed that they were fighting for their liberties and their lives, and in the strength of their faith they were counted worthy to tread down arrogance and usher in the England that we have known and loved.

Is there, in Draper’s closing words, a first tremor of doubt?

May their good example be imitated by us now, so that England may prove yet once more that she can serve the world better than those who hate her think, and that those who love her and believe in her destiny of service will be found to have been right and to have judged truly.

<sup>2</sup> The Inner Temple archives house a bound set of the Templars’ magazines. Some of their material – including Wilf Hastwell’s poem, below – may be found in D. Lewer, *A Spiritual Song*, London: The Templars’ Union, 1961.

the things that has pleased me is that I have receive a little line from [Pussy] Minor and Wings. It was ripping of them.”

In May 1915, letters arrived from Walter and Squib Dixon, two of six brothers in the choir; within a few weeks they both died at Ypres, the first of the Templars to be killed. Next was Lieut. Albert “Fattie” Maiden, killed in a ferocious action in France in which every one of his company’s officers was killed or wounded. Walford Davies was recording Maiden’s death when news came that Albert “Ghost” Newell, a radio-operator, had gone down with his ship; the two radio men were the only two on board to be lost – they almost certainly stayed at their post to send an SOS.

Early in 1917 Wilf Hastwell, Frank’s brother, sent an extraordinary poem to his fellow Templars: *A Phantasy*.

Dear –

What a hole!

All holes; nothing whole;

Funkholes, shell holes, rat holes,

Unholy, unwholesome, Hell.

Much mess, megrims, melancholy,

Melancholy, immeasurable melancholy, tragic, weird;

Weird, odd, extraordinarily odd, rum.

(Rum, butter, biscuits, bully, tea,

More rum, no rum, nothing but petrol water.)

Arms,

Arms and equipment,

Arms and legs, corpses, bodies, Bosche;

Armless horrors, harmless, hideous haters, hideous, hardening Ha! Ha!

Huns hunted; helmet hunting, souvenir hunting,

Buttons and badges, badges of rank, rigid rankers.

Rank, bad, rotten, rancidity.

And the mud –

Paste musty; slush and water, bloody water, chlorinated water,

Slime, slithery slough, bog, quagmire, beastly.

Puddles, pools and ponds

Wearing waders, weary waders; waders weak, wonky gone west,

'Ware wet feet. Where whale oil?

But where? Where? Where?

Cold, keen, cutting excruciating fire.

Firing, fire flingers, firelights, flash, whizz, whistle, crump!

(where was it?)

Crumps, coalboxes, Jack Johnsons, whizzbangs – O jumping Jehosophat,

French mortars and aerial torpedoes; minenwerfer and machine-guns,

Slingers and snipers, shots,

Good shots, bad shots, blighties, base buried or back again to billets,

Billets,

Bother, Back again to billets,

Trudging trenches, trails and tracks; ruts and roads, real roads;

Tramping roads roaring with the nine point two.

Huts, heavy roads, habitations, houses – Heaven!

Billets, blankets and beds,

Blessed beds; bon, billowy beds; planks and straw,

Beds and bye-bye.

On Easter Sunday, 8 April, Wilf was killed. The next month, “Fads” Durno-Steele, who was wounded twice as he led his men against Bulgarian forces, bound a rifle to his broken leg as a splint and was hit a third time. “Waddy” Waddams, a lieutenant in the Indian Army, was commanding a drill when a sepoy’s grenade launcher jammed: the sepoy froze, Waddams ran forward and freed the grenade, which instantly exploded. The sepoy was unharmed; Waddy was killed.

By the end of 1917 the Templars were writing as much about politics as about life at the front. Women’s suffrage was discussed at length. One author, in England, wrote:

I myself believe that every ungenerous thought towards our enemies is placed into the scale to weigh down or heap up the number of days during which this war is going to last. It is so frightfully important to finish it, for surely the nations have learnt their lesson. I wish I could see what “winning the war” meant, but I have asked this question so many times and nobody knows or even seems to trust anything they might imagine as to what “winning” means.

“Owl” Stacey replied forcefully. Winning the war means

That for the years of treacherous plotting against the rights and liberties of friendly nations – for the wanton breaches of faith – for the disregard of the laws of humane warfare – for the torture and murder of women and children, of the aged and of the prisoners – for all the fiendish horrors that unbridled lust and brutal savagery have brought on our world; for all these, I say, a terrible and summary vengeance shall be executed, both upon the tyrants that planned and ordered them, the brutal hordes that perpetrated them, and the nation of civilised hyenas that supported them and gloried in them.

Two voices, so different but both so unlike the voices heard in the letters we have from the theatres of war. Might it be telling (it is hard to tell, now) that neither of these disputants seems to have served at the front?

Walford Davies himself, as news reached London of two more deaths, confronted a different question:

Don’t you sometime find it awfully hard to pray or even to realise what prayer really is? I find it helpful to imagine that praying is *wishing*, raised to its highest power...All our wishes for these and for the other nine of our dear ones who have fought and finished their course, for them and especially for their sorrowing friends, their parents, who in some cases have lost all they had, all our dearest wishes can be raised into prayer that will probably

unite us in spirit in a wonderful way to all members of the Union living and dead.

Further deaths followed. Two airmen were lost: Billy Bishop had been longing to get out to France; he was killed after seventeen days there, in a fight against seven German planes – news came that one of his opponents in the battle thought him immensely brave to have fought on, when he could have escaped. Froggie Frow was brought down over Austrian lines; an Austrian airman later flew over the British lines and dropped Froggie's personal effects, with a photograph and a wreath. He was just two months past his nineteenth birthday. (We should remember how much later a boy's voice would break then. Billy Bishop was still singing treble at the age of seventeen.)

By the War's end, sixteen Templars had died; the Union had forty-three living members who had served in the forces. Two members had won the Military Cross; one the DSO. Peace did not permit an easy return to normality. Those who returned from the front were old beyond their years; the Union seemed to them to be holding prayer-meetings, when they wanted a chance to sing and to make sociable excursions from the city.

Far more divisive:- One of the Templars had become a conscientious objector. Others protested against his continued membership of the society. He was surely a coward. Walford Davies pleaded for understanding on both sides. "We all know what a tangle of motives we suffer from at times. Pulled two or more ways by our wills and inclinations. A fellow dons khaki to fight for his country and to his horror discovers that a lurking motive that helped to push him into it was self-regard: 'what will others think of me if I don't?' He is none the less an honest patriot."

Wilf Hastwell's brother typed out a poem and placed it on the mantelpiece in the Memorial Room, made available by Walford Davies in his rooms in Harcourt Buildings.

O happy men,  
Ye have not died for naught:

We own ourselves as bought  
By your great sacrifice.  
    And on the graves  
Where lie your bodies broken  
We place our grateful token,  
A wreath of firm resolve –  
    God helping us,  
As nobly as you died  
We'll live; and so provide  
Your lasting monument.

It was soon decided to install a permanent memorial, in the choir's practice- room – over there, on the north side of the church, – to those who had died. This too proved contentious. One member said that the only memorial that would satisfy him was to make sure there would be no more war to take away the lives of our young men.

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I draw no moral from the story of these young men. They were not grand or important; the fate of no nation lay in their hands. They can be seen as representatives, and no more, of their generation; ten thousand stories could be told, as poignant as theirs. Yes. But they served this church; they loved this Church; and they were loved here. It is fitting that their story, unheard for many years, should be heard in this place, their place, once more.

In 1920 a new Master of the Temple was appointed: The Rev William Henry Draper, Rector of Adel. Two years later the Templars' War Memorial was ready, and on Sunday 2 December 1922, after the evening service, he led the choir and congregation into the practice-room and dedicated the new memorial.

There was no man better qualified to do so. Mr Draper himself had had three sons; there is a man at Adel, now 100, who still remembers them.

Roger Draper, Captain in the Yorkshire and Lancashire Regiment: killed in action at Gallipoli, 22 August 1915;

Mark Draper, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps, killed in action, 7 Feb 1917;

William Draper, Private in the King's Own, Royal Lancaster Regiment. Returned home injured and died of his wound on 15 May 1918; he was buried in the Churchyard at Adel, within sight of the Rectory windows.

When Mr Draper addressed the parents of those Templars who had died, he spoke to them of his own sons too.<sup>3</sup>

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So many from one generation were lost. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, let us remember them.

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<sup>3</sup> Mr Draper wrote in 1927 *A Picture of Religion in England Today*: "There is something of the nature of repentance abroad today. The combatants are exchanging accusations with one another for their responsibility in bringing on the war. That itself is a sign of rudimentary grace. It admits a blush of shame, though it still strives to argue that it should be on someone else's cheek. No one is satisfied with the aftermath even of victory" (Ch. XIX, "The Leading of the Spirit").

Mr Draper's first wife had died in childbirth within a year of their marriage. He was married again: to Emilie. One of their daughters, Angela, died in 1903; Emilie died in 1913; both are buried at Adel. Mr Draper married a third time.

Mr Draper translated a poem of St Francis as the hymn "All creatures of our God and King".

