



ANZAC DAY IN WILTSHIRE.

(By 'F.W.G.')

As I watched the procession of school children at Sutton Veny ten years ago making their pilgrimage to the graves of our Australian soldiers and placing thereon their tributes of flowers to the remembrance of those men who had come from the uttermost parts of the earth in defence of the Empire, I felt how true it was that, paraphrasing Rupert Brooke

There is some corner of a homeland field
That is for ever Australia.

And at Barford St. Martins, at Durrington, at Norton Bavant, and many other parts of Wiltshire one found the same eloquent expression of a people's gratitude. And wherever there had been a village inn, there were thousands of carved initials on the old dining tables, and around the walls. But the great emblem of the Commonwealth of Australia had been left indelibly carved on those chalk hills of Wiltshire, visible for miles, and outshining the historic White Horse.

Standing by those graves my mind travelled back to old Aussie. Here was a simple wooden cross which marked the resting place of Sid. A few weeks before he enlisted I saw him bringing a mob of sheep in from Dandaragan to Moora. He had only a bike to travel on, and one of the sheep had knocked up. It was a hot day, and Sid had the sheep across his bike and pushed the thing with its heavy burden ten miles in.

And then there is Aubrey, who had lived the whole of his life on the plains to the west of Moora. He was a great horseman and a greater shot. He had lived through the peaceful days of old, seeing few people and little of the world. But there was no man who knew more of bush lore than he. He could get a dingo on the run at seventy yards without breaking the gallop of his horse. And he never visited Perth until his enlistment, I met him on his way down, and we said goodbye. He said simply, "There's a fight on and I think I ought to do my bit." And ten months later I had to go to that lonely homestead away on the plains to tell his old mother that Aubrey would never return. How I did it God only knows. But she just said, 'Well I'm proud of him.' And she was a widow.

Mother with unbowed head, hear them across the sea
The farewell of the dead, the dead who died for thee.
Greet them again with tender words and grave,
For saving thee, themselves they could not save.
So greet them well thy dead, across the homeless sea.

And be then comforted, because they died for thee:

Far off they served, but now their deed is done.

For evermore their life and thine are one.

And there was Wyn, who had left this old district to start a new work in Queensland. He had been but a year or two at his new holding when the call came. He went straight away without coming home. His parents have never seen his grave at Sutton Veny, but I have photographed it. And there are a hundred others of our best, mere kids when I first knew them in the schools of the Midlands, but who have set us an ideal which we shall not easily lose flight of. But the sight of the procession of happy children in Wiltshire, walking through the smiling fields, made me feel that here in those happy youngsters was the result of their great sacrifice. The two things were connected. And over those graves God Himself had woven His own memorial of green grass it seemed, to teach us that out of death must spring renewed life.

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