

**THE GRAIL OF LIFE: AN
ANTHOLOGY
ON HEROIC DEATH
AND IMMORTAL LIFE**

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The Grail of Life: An Anthology on Heroic Death and Immortal Life by John Haynes Holmes & Lillian Browne-Olf

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JOHN HAYNES HOLMES & LILLIAN BROWNE-OLF

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AN ANTHOLOGY ON
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COMPILED BY
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AND
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UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA



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TO THOSE IN EVERY LAND
WHO MOURN THEIR DEAD
MARTYRED
IN THE GREAT WAR
THIS BOOK IS REVERENTLY DEDICATED

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From Life to Death!
An eager breath,
A battle for the true and good,
An agony upon the rood;
A dark'ning of the light—
And night!

From Death to Life!
A peace from strife;
A voyage o'er an ocean wide
That moves from shore to shore its tide;
A passing of the night—
And light!

J. H. H.

PREFACE

I

The general plan of this Anthology was conceived by me in the summer of 1918. It was at this time, it will be remembered, that the menace of the German assault upon the West was shaking not merely Europe but the world to its foundations; and the tide of misery and horror, incident to the gigantic struggle, had mounted to the full. Uppermost in all men's minds at that terrific moment, of course, was the fate of civilization, and the doom which seemed to be falling upon all things deemed precious. Deep down, however, beneath this living consciousness of battle and siege, of tottering thrones and shaking systems, of revolutions, turmoils, "chaos and black night," were the agonies silently endured by each one of numberless millions of human hearts the world around, as they contemplated the peril, and soon or late met the loss, of persons who bore into the struggle, as husbands, fathers, sons, lovers, all that made life worth the living, and victory in the battle a matter of concern. John Galsworthy, in *Saint's Progress*, presents a pathetic picture of the sleep of London on any night during the period of the War. "Here a mother would be whispering the name of her boy . . . and a wife would be turning, to stretch out her arms to — no one; . . . By thousands the bereaved would be tossing, stifling their moans; by thousands the ruined would be gazing into the dark future. . . ." It is probable that most people felt the Great War only in this intense personal way, for most of

us, after all, live in the realm not of ideas or institutions at all, but of individual human relations. And this feeling touched such depths of passion, in such myriads of hearts, at the climactic moments of 1918, as never before had been equalled in human history.

For nearly four years, death had been reaping an unimaginable harvest by battle, starvation and disease. In these dreadful summer months, the flood of destruction was climbing to heights unseen by man in his most dreadful dreams of world disaster. Death was become the order of the day — untimely death, unnecessary death, horrible death! By a slow turning of life, on the axis of the War, so to speak, the modern man found the frontage of his experience exactly reversed from all that he had ever known, or anticipated. By precept, by example, by the inner promptings of his own soul, he had been taught to welcome life, and use it to the uttermost. Now, however, he saw life suddenly engulfed by death, and after-death! What is it to die, and to what does dying bring us — these were become, through the vast cataclysm of universal war, the dominant personal questions of the hour; and to the average man, the answer to these questions was more important than answers to all the gigantic questions that beset the minds of generals, statesmen and philosophers. To find this answer, would be perhaps to perform an inestimable service for the comforting and strengthening of many hearts. And where could this answer be more certainly found than in the utterances of the great and good in ages past, and of some of the humble but very valiant who were living and dying greatly at this great moment? It was in this thought that the idea of this Anthology was conceived, and work upon its pages happily begun.

On November 11, 1918, came the Armistice, which seemed to end the occasion for this book. Work, therefore, was