

**GOD AND THE
SOLDIER.
[NEW YORK]**

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God and the Soldier. [New York] by Norman Maclean & J. R. P. Sclater

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NORMAN MACLEAN & J. R. P. SCLATER

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—AND—
J. R. P. SCLATER, D.D.

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IS GOD TO BLAME?

GOD AND THE SOLDIER

CHAPTER I

IS GOD TO BLAME?

SOME chaplains tell us that theological questions are not rife in the minds of soldiers; and that, amongst the rest, the problem of the Sovereignty of Divine Love over a world, in which this war has come to be, is of little concern to them. I think we may reasonably doubt that opinion—partly because it is inconceivable that those who see the horrors of war face to face should not find food for thought concerning the world-government which permits them, and partly because we have direct evidence to the contrary. In certain instances, soldiers have been known to discuss this matter for long stretches of time, and sermons and addresses upon it, provided they were frank and open, never failed to rivet attention. But, for the most part, the man

who expected that those who were in daily touch with death would have much to teach him upon these perplexities came empty away. It is universally acknowledged that soldiers are mostly fatalists in time of battle. "If your luck's in, it's in: if it's out, it's out" is the common attitude. Only the bullet with a man's name and address on it will ever hit him; but no parapet will shield him when that one comes along. It is an attitude of mind that is Calvinistic, without the high, religious sense which a genuine Calvinism always possesses. It only requires the exclamation, "Kismet!" to make it indistinguishable from the mental attitude of the East. Some religious observers find comfort in its prevalence, but it is hard to see why they do. For it is only a new indication of the *stupefying* effects of war.

At the same time, while there is this nonchalant assent to a rigid Sovereignty, which foreordains all that comes to pass, when soldiers had time for reflection, after the actual strain of fighting was over, it needed little probing to discover that many were wondering how Christians were going to square, with the

conception of a God of Love, the fact that yesterday a thousand bodies of human beings had been predestined to be blown into bloody pulp. "Whatever is right, this is not," exclaimed a young officer, himself a candidate for the holy ministry, after a night of peculiarly gruesome experiences. The fundamental immorality of the whole thing was the one point that he saw clear. And the question arose at once, what about God? Does He indeed create evil? And, if so, is He as worship-worthy as His own creatures, who would uncreate it if they could? To these questionings, soldiers have no answer; but they expect one from the Church. Resolvings of contradictions, and visions of the higher unities do not come in the trenches: but a state of mind is engendered there, which makes for sharp criticism of traditional positions. Christian teachers will be put on their mettle in days to come by men who will want plain English on fundamental matters. Not only by soldiers—but by that great multitude, which scarce anyone can number, whose hearts hold wounds that will not heal, and whose spirits are bitter within them. There are men walking our streets in