

# **THE HARDEST PART**

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The hardest part by G. A. Studdert Kennedy

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**G. A. STUDDERT KENNEDY**

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HARDEST PART**



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# *The Hardest Part*

BY THE REV.

G. A. STUDDERT KENNEDY, M.C., C.F.

(*"WOODBINE WILLIE"*)

*Author of "Rough Rhymes of a Padre"*



*Therol*  
*R*

The sorrows of God munn be 'ard to bear  
If 'e really 'as Love in 'is 'eart,  
And the 'ardest part 't the world to play  
Mun surely be God's Part.

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

MCMXVIII



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## *Preface*

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THIS collection of essays needs no preface, but as Studdert Kennedy has asked me to write one, I can perhaps best comply with his request by telling those who read this book something about the man who wrote it.

Of Irish extraction he was brought up in Leeds, where his father was vicar of a parish in a poor district. Kennedy was educated at Leeds Grammar School and Trinity College, Dublin. In 1908 he was ordained by the Bishop of Worcester and went to work at Rugby under the present Dean of Windsor.

He eventually returned to assist his father in his slum parish in Leeds, and in 1914 he was appointed Vicar of St. Paul's, Worcester, a very poor parish of some 3,000 souls.

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As a parish priest Studdert Kennedy proved himself a diligent visitor, who by his sympathy and unselfish devotion won the hearts of many.

He is a speaker of extraordinary power, and I know none so effective with men. His powers of vivid description, his absolute naturalness and manifest sincerity attract and interest.

In the early days of the war, when a large number of men were in training at Worcester, some 2,000 attended the Cathedral on Sunday mornings. When Kennedy preached, as he sometimes did, Church Parade lost all its stiffness and boredom, every man was all attention, and the addresses with their racy remarks and telling illustrations were the chief topic of conversation during the ensuing week.

At the end of 1915 Kennedy, having been able to make arrangements for the duties of his parish, went out as a chaplain. His geniality and good fellowship endeared him to the men, and his

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## *Preface*

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bravery and sincerity won their respect. He went through a good deal of fighting, and the brutal realities of war brought him face to face with the problem of reconciling belief in the love of God with the omnipotence of the Deity.

These essays are an attempt by a thoroughly religious man to solve this and other problems, and bring religion into relation to the stern realities of life, and free it from deadening conventionalities in thought and practice.

These pages express the thoughts which came to the writer amid the hardships of the trenches and the brutalities of war. It is literally theology hammered out on the field of battle.

Some may disapprove of what he has written and dissent from his conclusions, but they will profit by reading the book and learning how an earnest man endeavours to do for the British soldier what the writer of the book of Job and the prophet



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Isaiah endeavoured to do for the men of their times.

Kennedy expresses in a striking and graphic manner what multitudes who have not his power of expression are dumbly thinking.

Expert theologians before condemning should read the author's postscript. Its revelation of the spirit of the man and his object in writing will do much to disarm criticism.

W. MOORE EDE.

DEANERY, WORCESTER.  
*May 1918.*

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*Author's Introduction*

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WHEN I had been in France as a chaplain about two months, before I had heard a gun fired or seen a trench, I went to see an officer in a base hospital who was slowly recovering from very serious wounds. The conversation turned on religion, and he seemed anxious to get at the truth. He asked me a tremendous question. "What I want to know, Padre," he said, "is, what is God like? I never thought much about it before this war. I took the world for granted. I was not religious, though I was confirmed and went to Communion sometimes with my wife. But now it all seems different. I realise that I am a member of the human race, and have a duty towards it, and that makes me want to know what God is like. When I am transferred into a new battalion I want to know what the

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Colonel is like. He bosses the show, and it makes a lot of difference to me what sort he is. Now I realise that I am in the battalion of humanity, and I want to know what the Colonel of the world is like. That is your real business, Padre; you ought to know."

I think that this question sums up in a wonderful way the form which the spiritual revival is taking among men at the front. First there comes a wider vision of humanity. This arises partly from the new sense of comradeship and brotherhood which exists in our new citizen armies, and unites them with the citizen armies of the allied nations, and partly from the world-wide scale of this tremendous conflict. The cutting of the world in two by the sword has helped men to see it whole. Men's minds are of necessity less parochial, less insular, and more cosmopolitan, in the best sense, than they were. As a consequence of this there is a quickened interest in ultimate questions, a desire to know the mean-