

THE SCENE

Living room in the Bradley Home. Time—Early evening, Armistice Day. Bradley enters reading a letter, walks across the room and sits on the davenport. Reads a moment, stands up and turns on the light by the end of the davenport. Sits and continues reading. Phyllis enters, arranges some flowers on the table. Starts in surprise when she sees her husband.

HAROLD

Well, dear, what are you looking at?  
 PHYLIS  
 Why, Harold, at you, of course. So that's why you wanted me to get your uniform. What on earth are you wearing it for?

HAROLD

This is Armistice Day.

PHYLIS

Yes, I know, but your uniform will bring back so many things to your mind, and you've always said you wanted to forget.

HAROLD

Yes, dear, that's right. I've always said I wanted to forget, but today I want to remember.

PHYLIS

Oh Harold, I wish you wouldn't say that, it will make you so uneasy, so unhappy, going back over those terrible days of the War. I do wish you could forget.

HAROLD

But, Phyllis, I must not forget—I must remember—everything.

PHYLIS

I wish you wouldn't say that, Harold.

HAROLD

But there are so many who can't forget. A man who has lost his legs can't forget. He remembers—every time he wants to walk and has no legs to walk on.

PHYLIS

I wish you wouldn't recall these things. Only last night you were dreaming again, you thought you were in the trenches—you were shouting—'Keep your heads down, men, those shells are finding our lines.'

HAROLD

Yes, that's what comes from trying to forget. It comes back at night. It disturbs me in my sleep. It just won't be forgotten.

PHYLIS

Perhaps that's right, dear. Perhaps we shouldn't forget. Some of the soldiers, though, have forgotten, they never mention the war, never even think of it.

HAROLD

I don't agree; it is true they don't talk about it but do you think that means they have forgotten?—forgotten the sacrifice—no, they haven't forgotten and they must never forget; and the world must never forget either. The war cost the lives of ten million men. Do you think that should be forgotten? (rises, walks nervously across the room. Stops suddenly and says—) You know, Phyllis, I went into a school room the other day and looked at the boys in class—bright, healthy, looking little fellows with their hands up so anxious to show their knowledge. Then suddenly it changed—I saw them in a shell hole and they were all dead, blown to bits. We can't have that—we can't have that—we can't—Oh, but I must not get worked up like this. (Goes back and sits heavily on the davenport.)

There is silence.

(He continues) I didn't tell you why I had my uniform on today. Let me read this letter, it explains it all. It was written sixteen years ago by a friend of mine in England.

PHYLIS

Sixteen years ago! By a friend of yours—in England!

HAROLD

Yes, you are interested, aren't you?

PHYLIS

I am.

HAROLD

Well, you'll be more interested in a minute.

PHYLIS

What do you mean?

HAROLD

Let me explain. Seventeen years ago in France I met Stanley Grant. He was a flying officer in the British Army. This letter explains how I met him. I'll read it in a minute. In 1919, when the war was over, he wrote this letter and pinned it on the wall of his bedroom where he could see it every night and every morning—you see—he didn't want to forget. Two weeks ago he posted it to me with a postscript explaining it all.

PHYLIS

He wrote it in 1919, sixteen years ago, and post mailed it now

HAROLD

Yes, that's it, and here it is. Dear Harold; You haven't forgotten, have you, that day in France when you saw an aeroplane fall between the lines. I haven't forgotten it and never will. You saved my life that evening at the risk of your own. You crawled out and found me all crumpled up and half-dead under the wreck, and you dressed my wounds and dragged me to a shelter. There in the shell hole I came back to consciousness and looked at you—you will never know how good you looked to me that night. I saw you were an American soldier and I thought—Uncle Sam, good old Uncle Sam, has come across the sea—and now has come across No Man's Land to save John Bull—John Bull wounded. You remember how I struggled to thank you and you said: 'For God's Sake, man, keep quiet and keep your head down. I haven't saved you yet, we've got a hundred yards of Hell to get through before we are safe.' And when you said—'hundred yards of Hell to get through'—I remember I looked over the edge of the shell hole and saw a star looking straight down at us, and I said to myself; It's Hell all right, but there is hope—there is hope—even in Hell—while we can still look up and

'OF ONE BLOOD'

A PLAY BY REV. FRED M. SELLERS  
 Pastor of Shavertown M. E. Church



(Editor's Note: During the World War, Fred Sellers was a Canadian aviator. Because he knows whereof he speaks, his passionate sermons in behalf of peace have had a tremendous influence in this section. When his one-act play was first presented it attracted so much comment that The Post asked permission to reprint it, in full, an unusual thing for a newspaper to do. Graciously, and with protests that he is not a playwright, Rev. Mr. Sellers granted the request. Any group is free to use the play for public or private presentation, although it is suggested that acknowledgement be made to the Shavertown preacher. The Post is extremely grateful to Rev. Mr. Sellers for permitting it to use his play.)

EXTRA COPIES

Extra copies of this page for groups desiring to produce. Rev. Mr. Seller's play can be secured at The Dallas Post, Lehman Avenue, Dallas.

If you ask that the copies be mailed to you please enclose ten cents for postal charges. In all cases, give the number of copies wanted.

see God's ancient stars shining in the sky. Then I thought of what my Mother used to say—'that the stars are God's thoughts on fire'—and I got to wondering what God could think of the mess man has made of the world—The fields blood-soaked and torn and all littered up with bits of men—arms and legs lying about and piled up in heaps—great junk-heaps of flesh and blood. I thought of many things that night, and made so many promises, and one of them was that some day I'd go to America and thank you. It was a long time ago, and at last I am going to keep that promise. I am sailing tomorrow. I am going to call on you—on Armistice Day, if I can make it. I'll be wearing my uniform, and a part of it is what I was wearing that night. I wish you'd wear your uniform, too, will you? And we will go out into some field and lie down together on the ground and look up at that same old star—and then I'll thank you.

Do you mean that he wants you to go out and lie on the cold ground and look up at that star?—what a queer idea!

Yes, it is queer, isn't it? But, listen, let me finish reading it. He says here—'Don't think me crazy. I feel I must thank you and I'll never be able to do it until we are lying on the ground looking at that star—the ground and the star became a part of me that night. You remember how it trembled and seemed to groan and shriek under the pounding, the terrific beating, of those huge shells. And you remember too, how I put my hand on your shoulder, when I took it away it was wet—wet with your blood—you were wounded, too. I kept asking you if you saw the star and you said, Yes, you saw it, that you had seen it often before. It was an old friend of yours, that you had talked to it and winked back at it when you were just a kid, playing hide and seek. I think, you know, that that dear old star was the same that led the Wise Men to Bethlehem, the birth-place of the Son of God. It is a long letter, Phyllis, he goes on and talks about many things—you can read it later. (Looks at his watch—) Why, he'll be here now any minute.

Well, now that we are all here, let's not be formal, let's be seated and make ourselves at home.

Harold, Carl and I have been arguing for seven days—all the way across the Atlantic—it was the old question, you know—who started the war.

Perhaps Mr. Colstein would rather not talk about that.

No, Colstein doesn't mind. He says that Germany had to fight—that she was forced into it.

Yes, I have met other Germans who said the same thing. What do you mean, Mr. Colstein by saying that Germany was forced into it?

Well, my country as you know had a treaty with Austria, and Mr. Grant here says that England had a treaty with Belgium and was honour bound to defend Belgium. Germany has honor, too, Mr. Bradley, and had to protect Austria.

You see, Bradley, how he looks at it.

Yes, I see. But, Mr. Colstein, Germany marched her soldiers into Belgium, Germany fired the first gun.

But, Mr. Bradley, don't you know that French soldiers were in Belgium before the Germans, that French generals were helping the Belgians mobilize before we crossed the border—and that means that France and not Germany, broke Belgium neutrality.

No, Mr. Colstein, I didn't know that—and I don't believe it.

But, Harold, you shouldn't say that, you don't know.

I think I do know. I know that Germany was prepared and had been prepared for years.

There was no crime in being prepared, Mr. Bradley.

America, Mr. Bradley, was fighting with God, and that's why you won?

I think Phyllis is right, Harold

Phyllis, this is Mr. Colstein. (They shake hands.)

Well, well, things are happening today.

Yes, they happened that first Armistice Day, too. Sit here, Mr. Colstein.

And do you know, we are going to have another visitor any moment. I asked Miss Baker to visit us this evening. She was Harold's nurse in France, you know.

Well, this is going to be interesting. The circle is going to be complete. Carl here will speak for Germany, Harold will represent Uncle Sam, I'll talk for the British, Harold's nurse will speak for the Red Cross, and you, Mrs. Bradley, you'll—speak for the women who waited and kept the home fires burning.

(There is a knock at the door. Phyllis meets Miss Baker and introduces her to the others.)

Well, now that we are all here, let's not be formal, let's be seated and make ourselves at home.

Harold, Carl and I have been arguing for seven days—all the way across the Atlantic—it was the old question, you know—who started the war.

Perhaps Mr. Colstein would rather not talk about that.

No, Colstein doesn't mind. He says that Germany had to fight—that she was forced into it.

Yes, I have met other Germans who said the same thing. What do you mean, Mr. Colstein by saying that Germany was forced into it?

Well, my country as you know had a treaty with Austria, and Mr. Grant here says that England had a treaty with Belgium and was honour bound to defend Belgium. Germany has honor, too, Mr. Bradley, and had to protect Austria.

You see, Bradley, how he looks at it.

Yes, I see. But, Mr. Colstein, Germany marched her soldiers into Belgium, Germany fired the first gun.

But, Mr. Bradley, don't you know that French soldiers were in Belgium before the Germans, that French generals were helping the Belgians mobilize before we crossed the border—and that means that France and not Germany, broke Belgium neutrality.

No, Mr. Colstein, I didn't know that—and I don't believe it.

But, Harold, you shouldn't say that, you don't know.

I think I do know. I know that Germany was prepared and had been prepared for years.

There was no crime in being prepared, Mr. Bradley.

America, Mr. Bradley, was fighting with God, and that's why you won?

I think Phyllis is right, Harold

Harold, and you too, Mr. Grant, that Germany was not committing a crime in being prepared.

I understand, Miss Baker—you are trying to be polite and I appreciate that, but Colstein here and Bradley and myself, we have been through the war and we must forget that we are Germans or English or American. We must find out who started the war. We must face the truth and then see that it doesn't happen again.

That's right, Mr. Grant, only of course I was through the war too.

Yes, and I was too. I suffered almost as if I had been in the trenches. We all saw it and suffered in our own way.

That's it exactly. We all suffered.

You said, didn't you Colstein, that there was nothing wrong in being prepared.

Yes, that's what I said.

It is one thing, you know, for a nation to be prepared to defend itself, and quite a different thing when a nation is prepared to lick the world.

The German people were convinced that the world was determined to stop their progress. The nations were jealous of our prosperity—were determined to stop us—to humiliate us.

You were told that, Colstein, and you, and all the Germans, believed it—you wanted to believe it.

Well, we were right, weren't we? Didn't events prove we were right—didn't we have to fight the world?

Yes, Germany asked for it and got it. You wouldn't listen to reason—it wasn't only in military circles that you talked war, but in your newspapers, in your school books, in your homes, and even in your churches—everywhere you talked and preached the necessity and the glory and the dignity of war, and that you, the Germans, were ordained by God to conquer and rule the world.

That's what you think. You were told that in England and you believed it—you wanted to believe it—but it isn't true—it's absurd.

Why, what's untrue about it. You say there was nothing wrong in being prepared, and I am just telling you how well you were prepared—prepared for war, for conquest, for victory—a great and glorious German victory, but you didn't get it. You got defeat, overwhelming defeat—you weren't prepared for that.

The German Army wasn't defeated in the field—and you should know that. Grant, Germany was defeated at home. Germany had no food, the soldiers asked for an armistice to save their mothers and wives and sisters from starving to death.

You will have to admit, though, that your army was beaten in France. You lost the war, Colstein, because you were fighting, not only against the world but against God Almighty.

America, Mr. Bradley, was fighting with God, and that's why you won?

Yes, I believe that's about it.

So, God was neutral until America came in.

What do you mean, Mr. Colstein?

Well, if God had been with the Allies they certainly would have won—with God's help in three years.

I don't like your putting it that way.

Why? What don't you like about it?

Your sarcasm.

Sarcasm?

Yes, sarcasm.

Well, if God helped you make war, why didn't God help you make the peace?

I don't know what you mean.

You should.

But I don't.

You say you beat us in the war, will you admit that you betrayed us in the peace?

Betrayed you?

Yes, betrayed us. The Allies disarmed Germany and promised to disarm themselves—did you do it?

Would Germany have done it?

That isn't the point. You claim God was with you, and I want to tell you, Mr. Bradley, that that's an old trick.

An old trick?

Yes. Nations and individuals have always dragged God into their wars when they wanted to make themselves and other people believe in their moral superiority. I call that blasphemy.

Blasphemy?

You said a moment ago that I was sarcastic, I say now that you are blasphemous.

Oh, Harold, why are you having all this argument? I am not enjoying it at all, are you Dorothy?

No, I am not enjoying it a bit, and what's the use anyway. What's the use of fighting the war all over again, we can't change it now—we can't change history. And besides, it is not fair. Here we are four of us against Mr. Colstein—four to one.

Its been that way for a long time, Miss Baker. Before the war, during the war, and since the war. The odds have always been against Germany.

I am not talking in that spirit at all. Miss Baker says we can't change history, I think we can. We can prevent history from repeating itself. For thousands of years history has been doing that and will continue to do it if we do not change our ways of thinking and living. History repeats itself because people repeat themselves—because one generation repeats the lies and stupidities and sins of the other. But—of course, if Mr. Colstein feels that way about it—let's forget it.

(Impatiently.) Yes, let's forget it.

You don't forget though, Grant, and you don't, Bradley, you sit in judgment, proud of your past, sure of your future. England was innocent, America was innocent, Germany was guilty—and you call that forgetting.

But, Mr. Colstein, you don't understand.

Yes, I do, you and Bradley haven't learned a thing in sixteen years. You won the war and then you dragged God into it to make your victory look respectable, then you make us pay.

Made you pay? You didn't pay for the war, Colstein.

No, Colstein, you didn't pay. We were too easy, we let you off.

Yes, we paid. Paid with two million dead soldiers, with thousands of men blind and insane, thousands without arms, without legs, who'd be better off dead. For seventeen years we have

been bleeding from our wounds. Germany is desperate. Germany is going mad.

Going mad? Germany was mad in 1913, mad with pride and power, that's why she started the war—she WAS mad.

Grant, you make me sick. I am sick and tired of hearing you talk like a saint. You English, you are innocent, you are always innocent. England has been fighting for a thousand years and she is always innocent, always right. You strut through the world like a peacock. You are ridiculous—impossible!

Yes, you are sick of the English, (speaking slowly to control his voice) and I'll tell you why you're sick. We made you sick in 1914 when we swept your ships from the sea and bottled up your navy in the Keil Canal. You were so sick then, you have never got over it. And I'll tell you something else, I'll tell you twice so you won't forget. You are just a dumb dutchman! (Speaking quickly, angrily. Rises, Carl also rises, they are standing close together facing each other.) You're blind, blind as a bat. When we whipped you in France and you surrendered, we should have pushed you back into Germany and blown your homes to bits and given you a real taste of the hellish thing you started.

Mr. Grant. Mr. Colstein, will you let me speak. You came here tonight as two friends, and now what are you. You were going to find out who started the war and now you are ready to make war. Your words are like the bombs and bayonets you used in the trenches. You have turned this room into a battlefield.

Yes, you have lost your tempers. You are ready to fight again.

No, no, Mrs. Bradley, I haven't lost my temper . . .

No-o-o-o, Mrs. Bradley.

Yes, you have. And I have been sitting here listening and I have learned something—something important. I have learned how the war started; it was started by men like you, Mr. Grant and like you, Mr. Colstein, who were so anxious to get their rights and more than their rights that they lost all sense and reason. They forgot there was ever such a thing as justice. Their voices, red-hot with anger, their wills crossed like high-tension wires, with the sparks flying in all directions.

That's it, that's just it—the sparks flew in all directions, there was an explosion that blew the world to pieces; and we will never be able to put the world together again without justice.

This argument, like the war, is ridiculous. It is all so silly and stupid, isn't it? Germans and English and Americans, we are all one, aren't we?

Yes, we are all of one blood.

Of one blood? Of one blood where is that written—who said that?

God—bath made—of one blood. You know, don't you, Carl?

Yes, Stan, I think I can tell you. I learned that years ago in church. It was said by St. Paul when he was preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Greeks on Mars Hill. I God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth.

(Justice enters, blindfolded, walks slowly across the room, speaks to the players.)

I have waited patiently outside, hoping at last to hear you speak my name. I cannot tell you how often I have waited in vain for a chance to enter the private rooms and council chambers of the world. Men often mention my name and pretend to desire nothing more than my presence, when all the time I know from their tone of voice that they desire nothing less. I thought tonight that once I heard you speak my name, and in a tone that made a free way for my feet. Ah, that men everywhere would make a free way for the feet of justice. I was the first to come. I am the last to speak.

(She walks forward. The lights are lowered. She stands, a symbolic figure, a blindfolded woman holding a pair of scales in her hand.)

I am Justice. There can be no peace without Justice. Man must learn to know the truth and Justice of God. I am blind to the colors of men and to races and to national boundary lines. I am blind to all the things that make for strife and bloodshed and war. The things that divide us are accidental and artificial. The things that unite us are eternal and eternal—the eternal bonds of blood and born. I can see with the eyes of the spirit—in the veins of men all blood is red—red—red like the blood that dripped from the hands and feet of Christ when they nailed Him to the Cross. Long ago the Prophets sang of peace, and the angels sang of peace and goodwill to all men and then Christ came with His benediction on the peacemakers. He is the way for Germans and French, English and Americans, Italians and Ethiopians—East and West, North and South. We must learn to walk in His way—then we shall put the swords back to rust in their scabbards; or—better still—we shall beat our swords and spears into plowshares. We shall learn war no more. We shall live as one people, of one blood, in one world. We shall walk in the path of peace and prosperity—in the broad highway of beauty and brotherhood.

Benediction—MINISTER

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and to communion and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

SEASON'S GREETINGS