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WILFRED OWEN
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"OLD BAL BUS"

GRIFFITHS 58X.

MEMORIAL

This edition marks the official opening of the Wilfred Owen Memorial Library, hence its being devoted to the theme of War. Boys were simply asked to write about War or Peace - practically without exception they chose War - and we offer a selection of their best writing and drawings. There is an obvious question - would boys have written like this fifty years ago?

Probably not and the reason lies partly in the poetry of Wilfred Owen.

PRISONERS OF WAR.

by P. Roberts. 2J

The prisoners were chained
to the blood-stained walls
Whilst the lashing of torture
Was their only search for
independence,
But every lash of the whip
Brought them nearer to their
freedom -
The everlasting freedom of
joy and peace.
The freedom of death.

MOMENT OF TRUTH

by C. R. Meagher. Form 3B

This episode took place shortly after the declared British-Allied victory in 1919. The two men involved are a British Private and a Turkish officer. The British private had given the officer a packet of cigarettes, for which the officer exchanged his shoulder pips. The two men had talked of their families, their homes and various views had been discussed. The officer turned to the British private and said:

"You know my friend, whatever papers are signed, as to the victory of the war, there is no true victor. Everybody loses, it may be a brother, or a child losing a father, or a wife losing a husband, maybe parents losing an only child. Whatever the case, the outcome is the same. Years won in achievement are lost, men are degraded, and turned into a shadow of their former selves. Empires crumble, devices which could be used to benefit mankind are used as weapons of mass destruction. Remember what I have said for man will never learn any better".

This was the view of a certain officer in the one time glorious Turkish army.

WAR

by D.L.Owen 2J

It was now night. All the fears of War
 were forgotten,
 No birds sang; nothing stirred the air,
 Not even the patrol that went out
 doomed never to return,
 By now we had been getting used to the
 stillness and the peacefulness of night.

As we slept in the trenches we dreamt
 of our home town where no threat of War
 lurks,

But here was nothing, everything mutilated
 by the products of War,
 And even the soldiers, withered and decayed
 under the strains of an experience we knew
 nought of.

THE END

by P.J. Woods 3A

From the bird filled copse,
 The singing suddenly stopped.
 A bullet rings out, and men begin to shout.
 But the fighting has stopped far below
 Far below are the dead.

Some thin, some well-fed
 Harry Baker, Tom Todd.
 Who fought for country, and for God.
 Their end was so simple
 But important in this strife,
 They both fought bloodily
 For their own mode of Life.

OBITUARY

by J.G. Sherlock. 4A.

In the barren, lifeless field of corpses lay one man, miraculously alive, but what a price to pay for life. One arm lay helpless at his side, crimson with his blood streaming from a great, jagged gash across his forehead and right eye. He tried to raise himself a little to look

INCIDENT.

by J. Cottrell. 4B.

There goes the siren. Quick down the street and into the shelter. Oh I do hope its not me that gets killed tonight. Hurry, children, I can hear the planes coming over; run. Quick, down there into the shelter; Good luck!

Now to my gun. Here come the first bombs. One's hit the Jones's house; poor them. I wonder how many common homes they have in Germany. How many get killed in Germany in this war.

War, Who first called it war? It's not war. It's complete destruction of everyone and everything. They bomb and kill us so we bomb and kill them; so they bomb and kill us and this goes on till there is no one left to kill.

We must make sure that there are none of them left and plenty of us left. There they go, dropping their bombs. Hey! that one was near our house. They're not getting away with that. (Fires the gun even faster than before).

I got one!, I got one!, he's crashing! That's one to me. One plane and eight lives. Why am I so happy to have killed eight people?

This war is useless. The Germans are human beings like us. 'Why do we kill human beings like ourselves'. Is it that they will kill us in return?

INTO BATTLE

by L. D. Thompson. 4B.

The day was very cold and tense as the front line of men waited for the order. Most of them were wearing heavy coats to keep the cold out and others had just their battle dress underneath a small jacket. Their mission was to capture the ridge of Nieve Chapelle in northern France. The ridge was about 500 yds. long and was held by a battalion of Germans.

Now the captain rose and said 'fix bayonets'. A metallic click was heard all the way along the trench as the bayonets were fixed firmly onto the ends of the Lee-Enfield rifle. 'Charge' and a company rose from behind their battle-scarred trench and ran forward. A rhythm of machine guns in the distance was heard and men began to fall one by one. Some were killed instantly, others wounded and some maimed for life. A battery of mortars were positioned on the eastern side of the ridge and these rained ton after ton of high explosives on the approaching men.

Out of perhaps 400 men only about 75 remained and among the water-filled craters could be seen corpse after corpse. Stretcher bearers were sent out and collected most of the wounded or dead or dying.

Now one man had a jagged piece of shrapnel in his left side and if he did not receive immediate attention he would most probably die from lack of blood.

An operation was carried out without any real anesthetic, all the doctors could use were small stiff tots of brandy or rum to keep the patient calm or even make him sleep. After 2 hours the piece of shrapnel was removed and a large cotton pad put over the wound, so as to stop any germs getting in. However there was more than this man to attend to and so the doctors had to work unceasingly. Some died, others lost arms or legs and others just fell asleep before they were even operated on. The fire on the attack had been murderous and hardly anybody had survived.

THE HORROR AND BITTERNESS OF WAR AS TOLD BY PRIVATE JOHN GORDON

by C. Darlington. Form 4B

It was two days before Christmas 1916 that the barrage on the Germans started. We stood in the trenches our feet engulfed in mud and slime. As it poured down in torrents we moved about trying to keep warm.

You dare not do what one of my mates had done. He lay down on the mud one night and sank partly into it. That night a severe frost came and froze him solid to the mud. The frost had bitten at his fingers and his feet and his clothes looked as though they had been starched. He died afterwards in hospital as doctors were not very capable and there were so many casualties.

We stood hoping and praying the barrage would never finish because when it did we had to go over the top into the horror of warfare and the determination for survival. The barrage suddenly stopped and a deadly silence overcame the countryside.

The platoon leader's whistle blew and the line all rose together. We started across no-man's land and most of us kept to the broken dead trunks so as not to be shot. We reached the first lot of wire but everything was as quiet as a graveyard. Suddenly just in front of us were some dull thuds on the ground.

They exploded and the dull horrible hiss of mustard gas came out of them and spread into a huge cloud. Men fought to get their masks on as the gas produced a searing heat inside their lungs, burning and choking them. Most of us got our masks on but those who didn't writhed with agony on the floor.

We carried on and then the German machine guns opened fire. We rushed forward dodging the bullets and blasts of hand grenades and reached the German line. Hand to hand fighting and bayonetting took place. Often some of our men were killed because the long bayonet they used got stuck into a German's ribs and while he fought to get it out another German stabbed him.

The battle ended, the Germans surrendered. Our men wandered over the battlefield looking for mates and brothers whom the Germans had put down. Men sat down and felt nauseated at what had happened. The dead were buried and we took up our new position. Now it was their turn to push us back, but they wouldn't do it because there was vengeance in our eyes.

It is astonishing in these relatively peaceful days, - peaceful that is, for the average inhabitants of the British Isles - how much we enjoy brooding over war in our leisure moments. But little of the glamour of Omdurman or the siege at Peking visits the battlefields which we now seem to choose as our preferred leisure-grounds.

The mud of Flanders from 1914 to 1918 has few spectacular attractions. Was not enough said and written during the Twenties and Thirties, about what went on in the trenches, by men who had served in them for their grandsons to be able to let the dead bury their dead - one world war and several limited wars later?

But what was the kind of reaction appropriate to World War II? There too, battles produced horrors, suffering in resisting a supreme horror: National Socialism.

It is impossible to be pacifist about them - and doubly impossible for those most likely to be so, the liberal intellectuals.

The pacifist reaction that came after World War II as it does after all wars, could not seek, its dread examples in campaigns fought against Hitler.

Gandhi's view that the German Jews all ought to have committed suicide in order to rouse the world against their oppressors, found no takers in Western countries and those usually most in sympathy with such views, this time quite rightly, preferred the violent resistance of the Warsaw Ghettos.

What our increasing imaginative pre-occupation with war and violence reveals is the inadequacy of amelioristic views and the deep misunderstanding that exists between those who hold them and the mass of men born to bear the weight of their own unchangeable contradictions.

Let us read the description which that great and celebrated war poet, Wilfred Owen, presents to us in his poem 'Exposure'.

"The poignant misery of dawn begins to grow...

We only know war lasts, rain soaks, and

clouds sag stormy,

Dawn masses in the East her melancholy army,

Attacks once more in ranks on shivering

ranks of gray,

But nothing happens. "

WAR, PEACE AND THE F.A.CUP FINAL. by P.Everard L6

It is true to say that the F.A.Cup Final bears some resemblance to war. One has the crowds in the stadium who can be likened to the people who are not fighting the war but are cheering on the players (who can be likened to soldiers) to fling their forces against each other. This football match also bears a resemblance to war in that in both cases one has a great deal of artificially-created emotion which has been brought about by propaganda to both participators and supporters.

For these people only care about the result of the contest (be it war or a football match) not because they are really concerned but because they have the hot blood of the latest gaudy advertisement of the Cup Final or War; they have propaganda literature, not blood, flowing in their veins.

The common soldier, or the common stuck-at-home patriot, is led to believe in wartime that his country is "as pure as the driven snow" and fighting for Right; while the enemy is the devil personified, attempting to engulf the patriot's country. The truth of the matter is that there is no "black" or "white" in terms of right or wrong (whatever they may be), but only varying shades of grey.

The politicians make the wars, the people whom the politicians lead pay the price of the politician's war-mongering or miscalculated 'brinkmanship'.

At the present stage it seems almost as if life is just a series of disastrous five year wars, with twenty year breaks between them. Some might say 'War helps to lower the population in overcrowded areas' (burning your house down, by the same token, gets rid of the mice).

Peace is not punctuated by war, but war is a short, sharp, but continuous thing punctuated by peace. Until we learn to stop fighting (which will be when we stop thinking that 'might is right' and the best man always wins) we will keep on warring.

One war is very often brought about by a former war on an unjust treaty immediately following, e.g. the Second World war was brought about partly by the First World War, itself brought about by the Boer War.

War is also brought about by attempted Empire Building (usually on someone else's Empire) and by treaties and alliances between countries which divide the world up into armed camps, the member nations of which are more arrogant than they would be on their own.

But, like the F.A.Cup Final, the war comes to an end; and like the F.A.Cup Final, it will come round again, sooner or later.

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A LAST WORD

by T. Faulkner 4B

War looked at in a paragraph is just another word in a collection of many, but looked at on its own, it means sorrow, bloodshed, killing and expenditure. In the second world war £5,000,000 were spent every day.

If it were spent in peacetime on say disease, what of the diseases which are still unconquered today might well not be.

THE COLD WAR.

by M. Grover. VA

Wars in the past have been conflicts of nations, for example, the Napoleonic Wars, and the two World Wars. They were fought with soldiers, guns, warships, and entangled the whole of the civilised world. The motives for wars were simple: desire for colonies to increase a nation's wealth; desire to gain control of a race of people, or the desire to extend a country's influence over all its neighbours.

The situation today is very different, however, and is in effect another major war. It is an entirely unprecedented war, in that, neither guns, tanks or aircraft are used, and the source of friction is not one single imperialist nation. The motives of the silent war lie in the Marxist doctrines, that is, world revolution to form a worldwide Communist system. The weapons are the spoken and written word, and industrial action. The troops are handfuls of quislings, led by trained, foreign agitators operating from grossly over-staffed embassies.

In Britain, Communism is making little headway, due, probably, to our prosperity. A Communist regime forced on us would lower our living standards, place us under direct Russian influence, and above all remove all our cherished rights and liberties.

In conclusion, it seems that Britain is holding her own in the cold war, but the general apathy accompanying this success could be most dangerous. Anyone who helps to undermine the Country's economy and morale, is a traitor, and should be treated as such.

WAR

by J. Kelly 4A

The soldiers of this world must have been mad, agreeing to go out onto the battlefield and have their heads blown off by a chunk of metal, or being turned into a sieve by machine-gun bullets, just for the glory of fighting and dying for their own country.

It's the politicians I blame. They are the people who get us into wars in the first place and they are always first into their air-raid shelters when a war is on, telling feeble lies, trying to put the blame for what has happened on the shoulders of somebody else.

So in fact when we add up all these atrocities we realise that the only good thing which we get out of a war is the peace which follows it - a thing we already had before the war started.

THE HORRORS OF WAR

by K. Chamberlain. 4 b.

War to me is just a good excuse for people to brutally kill other people with whom they have no real grievance.

People who would never harm a fly were brutally savaged and killed. You hear of men talking how great they were in the war but they were the ones who used to usually stay behind the main action and had never seen blood pouring from ghastly wounds, men crying out from wounds, dying but just hoping for a miracle that someone would save them, but people who have been up in the midst of it usually prefer not to talk about it.

One day you could be talking with one or two of your friends but next day they would be dead, killed by the explosion of a bomb dropped the previous evening by the frequent German raids.

There is the feeling of women and children who had husbands and fathers and sons in the war not knowing whether they were dead or alive but still hoping they would be.

And there is the greatest irony of men not knowing what they were really fighting for, whether it was for themselves or for their country.

SONG OF THE SOLDIER

by T. Loy. 5B

Oh, the great war is coming
I'm filled with such pride
When faced by the enemy
I know I won't hide.
I know by my conscience
I know I'll be brave,
And I know by my praying
My country I'll save.

Through the night as I listen
The guns rumble near
And I stand and I watch
And I tremble with fear.
Through the day I say nothin'
But think as men cry
Like all warriors before me
"God, I'm afraid to die."

Though the war is now over
 I still wake up at night
 Do I merit the nightmare
 So gruesome a sight.
 Broken bodies of men
 That lie in the mud.
 And the pool that grows bigger
 Of young soldiers' blood.

AFTERMATH

by T.N. Birkett 2J

The mortar-shell bursts overhead,
 And lights the dark-blue sky;
 Illuminates the mangled dead,
 And carries the wounded's cry

The muddy trenches are still,
 There's no-one but the dead,
 That dwell upon the war-pained hill,
 Where all hell was fed.

An armoured car of twisted steel,
 Lies rusting in the mud;
 And church-bells in the distance peal,
 For dead men and their blood.

WAR AND PEACE.

by A.B. Davies. Form 1 H

On the first of September 1939 the Germans invaded Poland, the war had started. The high-speed German Stukas pulverised the Polish defences. Hitler's army then pressed on until it reached the English Channel. Britain now stood alone. Meanwhile though the Italian and German forces had been defeated in Egypt, Greece had been captured.

The Americans were brought into the war when the Japanese attacked their fleet

on the seventh of December 1941. On D-Day, sixth of June 1944, the allies attacked Normandy, and the assault succeeded. At the end of March 1945 the allies crossed the Rhine and into Berlin. Later the Germans surrendered. The war ended on the 14th of August 1945.

There was now peace but war had left Europe bankrupt and ravaged. But America gave economic aid to Europe. In 1945 fifty countries including the U. S. A. and Russia signed the charter of the United Nations Organisation.

The party was built up so that peace could be maintained. This organisation played a large part in bringing the world back into her normal state after the war.



COMBINED OPERATION (TROOPS OF FOUR NATIONS).

R. MORT, 5BX.