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# Woman and War

by Jessie Wallace Hughan

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A younger soldier was telling of life in the trenches. His eyes glowed as he spoke of the comradeship, the songs, the fervor of patriotism, the poignant thrill of the advance, and the hours of glorious peril that for him had ended in the wound and the hospital. After him a woman arose, lovely, sad, and black-robed. She told simply of the mothers of the war, their toil, their waiting, and their anguish — of one mother who, hearing that her three sons had fallen for the Fatherland, exclaimed in tearless resignation, “The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

“The Lord gave, and we have thrown away,” came the words to my lips. Why blame our stupendous folly upon the Lord? In my mind I saw the thousands of mothers — English, French, German, Belgian — each offering to destruction that for which she had suffered, tearing her heart out — for what? That the boys might thrill with an hour’s romance, and that the map of Europe might remain unchanged.

It is real and sincere, we know. Whatever may be the economic motives of the powers that make war, the women who give their dearest give them as unto the Lord, and many, at least, of the boys who go on the hideous field of battle do so in the spirit of unselfish idealism.

Yet so did the women who threw their babies to the crocodiles; so did the men who cast themselves under the wheels of the Juggernaut.

And we women of America, Socialist women,

are we to sit mute while capitalists foment war, while workingmen declare war, and then to work and knit and suffer at home?

We are against war. Then let us fight it., Only by the ballot can we who care for human lives make our voice heard above those who care for property and prestige, for national honor and national defense, and all the age-old shibboleths that men have elevated above the Ten Commandments. Our hands are tied; votes for women will untie them.

War settles nothing, achieves nothing, except the right of the strongest. Yet there is but one political party in the world that knows it can gain nothing by war, and that is the Socialist Party. Socialism did not stop the war in Europe, only because the Socialists were not the majority. Read the manifesto of the American Socialist Party after the Lusitania disaster, and then find one non-Socialist political body in the world that has dared to approach its bold stand against war. A vote for Socialism is a vote for peace.

Yet war may come upon us today or tomorrow, before suffrage, before Socialism. Will you, then, send your sons to the slaughter because a capitalist government invites them? There is such a thing as a strike — a general strike possibly — but best and most direct of all, an enlistment strike. So far our country has no conscription. We are free to refuse point blank. If you, man or woman, are ready to make this refusal, will you sign and forward the following pledge:

I, being 18 years of age, hereby pledge myself against enlistment as a volunteer for any military or naval service in international war, and against giving my approval to such enlistment on the part of others.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

—

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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(Please forward pledge to Anti-Enlistment League, 61 Quincy Street, Brooklyn, NY).

Let us work for suffrage; let us work for Socialism. Yet should the madness come before the women can cry halt, before the working class can cry halt, let us take our stand boldly against the hoary fetish of war, and refuse.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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