

Woman and War

By RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

I have heard praise of you, because you fling,
Tearless and proud, son after golden son
Into the maw of this abhorred thing
That even poets grow ashamed to sing;
This bloody dream of bayonet and gun,
This obscene idol shutting out the sun,
This goblin with so wild a glory crowned,
So decked with dazzle of old words that flame
Along the heart, and girt with such sweet sound
Of lying music,—men still call it fame
To do this murder with a laureled name.

Ah! women, blindly, noble, now to you
Is given Time's divinest deed to do:
To pluck this madness from the mortal brain;
To root from out the very thoughts of men
This dread inheritance, this ghost that dwells
In the dark swamps beneath the soaring soul,
This shuddering larva of old lusts and hells
Feeding on radiance, making foul the scroll
Of man's ascension; out of language tear
Any bright word that makes this foulness fair,
Strip off the gold, and show the monster there—
Till men forget, or a wild legend deem,
That such a thing as War was once a dream,
And man's supremest vanity to kill.
The upturned faces of a million dead
Plead to the sky; there is no help but you,
O women! you that proudly harvested
Out of your travail all this flower of men