

"Oh!" she said, "I am so sorry. I had thought that the war had just thrown our own writers into stress of work. Every piece of news you hear only seems to make this war more terrible. We have been thinking that it would come home most of all when the casualties to our brave boys are listed. But I suppose there are many bitter casualties that we shall never hear of. I have assumed, without taking much trouble to think about it, that other people would be like myself—more or less compelled to economize on things that don't matter very much. Do you know, I have been surprised at the number of things I could do without."

"The war has brought us near the few essentials of existence," I said. "If we were in the devastated countries we should learn how few our necessities really are. The problem with us is to realize and live up to the realities of the war without having to live and sup with them."

"You mean we need a sort of absent treatment of the war?" the lady suggested. Perceive, once more, an uncommon felicity in putting a whole problem into a phrase—a precious gift, which the Lady ought not to be allowed to confine to a personal circle. The remark led to a more or less philosophic discussion of the psychology of warfare at a distance—the phenomena of temperament that discover themselves in a belligerent people who are far remote from the war and from its most serious manifestations.

"A letter to-day," I told her, "from a famous woman writer who lives in a rural community, tells me that her neighbors show little interest in the war. They are working and amusing themselves as usual. The outward and visible signs of being at war are confined to a few women knitting socks for soldiers—most of whom have never seen a soldier in uniform."

"And do you think those people are part of my impression of Canada being like a person walking on the mountain side on a dark, stormy night, unconscious of yawning precipices before her?"

"Precisely," I said.

"They are not to be blamed for not realising," the Lady continued. "It seems to me that the faculty of projection is one of the rarest and most delicate attributes of the human mind. How can you put yourself into another's place, if you have no idea of what that place is like? How can a man who has spent his years in the constant remoteness of the farm get a lively sense of what is going on in Europe, and of the subversion of civilization that is represented in the yoke the Germans are putting upon the Belgians? And if you tell him that if the Germans came to Canada they would do the same thing here—he doesn't suppose that there can be any more hardship in growing crops under German rule than there is under Sir Robert Borden. Why——"

The Lady broke into a little gale of laughter. When it was spent she said:—"How absurd of me to link the good Sir Robert's name with German rule. I have only seen him once, and nobody would wish to couple him with German kultur. How very odd we are becoming in the way we associate totally different things."

"Yes," I said, "quite recently I heard a gracious lady talking of having herself become brutalised."

Again the silvern laugh, and again a searching question.

"Can you tell me how to make the isolated farmer feel the reality of his danger and the insistence of the call to sacrifice? Do you know anything more important than that—except, of course, the actual sending of men to battle? How can the right ideas about the war be spread in the country places? If you get the country right the town will be sure, to the end, as well as at the beginning."

Observe it again, you who suppose women do not find the essentialities of a great situation—the Lady professing inefficiency in the great art, even when she was showing herself a natural mistress of it; unschooled as she was in the methods of harder, more practised beings who sometimes pass for states-