

A TRAGEDY OF WAR

By Rebecca Buhay.

Twilight has set in, and crude, menacing shadows are softly creeping into the narrow room. Each article of furniture finds its echo in a grotesque, ghostlike form; here the shadow is long and narrow, there short and broad; but each seems a harbinger of dark and sorrowful thoughts and deeds.

In the centre of the room is reflected a long thin shadow of a woman, which is every second changing its shape. She is seated by the table, the mother—a thin, frail little woman with silver grey hair. She seems so old in the twilight shadows, and yet did one but see her face, one would know that she was older in sorrow than in years.

There she sits—and every second her form is shaken with heartrending sobs. She is sister to the shadows, for they seem to follow her every moment. Sometimes she drops her head on to the table in front of her, sometimes she lifts up her hands to her temples. At moments the sobs cease and there is silence in the room. A little while she passes. She leaves her position from the table and walks over to the small window, where her face is made visible by the street lamp. Such a careworn face! The blue eyes are deeply planted in their sockets and deep shadows are visible underneath. The lips are thin and firmly set and hard lines have shaped themselves from the corners of the mouth. All is deathlike pallor and the hands belonging to the frail figure twitch nervously.

She leaves the window and takes something very much like a photograph from a nearby shelf. She clasps it with both hands and kisses it feverishly. The sobbing breaks out afresh, "My Tom; my Tom," she cries, between her sobs, "Oh, my God, why did you not take me instead of him; my only darling, gone—gone forever." She walks over to the table, places the picture in front of her, and every now and then maddening agonising exclamations burst from her. She beats her head with her hands. "Tom, Tom, come back; come back. They took you from me, your mother; they put a gun into your hand, they bade you shoot, and now you lie in an unknown grave, far from all who love you, slain; gone for ever." A tremor passes through her body; then there is silence again. She gazes long at the picture of the boy before her and a thousand memories come back to her of when he was a child—her eighteen-year-old lad, now dead!

Her Hopes Destroyed

She sees him running through the streets with the other boys, a little lad of six, a head of golden curls, a dimpled face with eyes sparkling with mischief. She remembers the care and ceaseless labor she spent on him from his birth—(his birth which had nearly cost her her life)—so that he should grow up strong, tender, and clean. The picture changes. He is now a boy of twelve, his father is dead, and the young mother struggles her hardest so that her boy may have bread and other good things in life. She sees him returning from school with his satchel strapped on his shoulder. "Mamma" he cries, "I'm first rank." The mother heart leaps with joy; she clasps her darling to her breast; she is so happy, and he dotes on her. . . . Time passes. He is working now, and his first thought is for his mother; she is proud of her big strapping boy; she trembles; he is growing older, and another will soon claim him, for is he not one of the gods born to be loved. Again the years pass, and over the whole land a giant monster is lying in wait. War has entered in to kill. Tyrants have planned to lay waste the land. The mother heart cries out. She does not understand; she is only a simple sweethearted mother, but she knows it is wrong; she knows it is cruel to sever mothers,

fathers, and sons, in order that men should kill other mother's sons. "They have never harmed us," she cries, when her Tom, roused by patriotic speeches, declares revenge on Germany. "My darling Tom, I'm only a plain woman. I don't pretend to understand, but how can it profit us to kill one another? Is not every German mother's son just the same as you?" But Tom does not understand his mother's reasoning—he believes all that is told him, the patriot in him is aroused, and he breaks his mother's heart and goes to meet his doom.

Dissillusion and Death

Dark was the day when Tom left for the slaughter-house of Europe. She knew he would never come back. How she had begged and begged him not to go. She remembered the scene by the train, when she kissed him her last good-bye; it was as if he had torn her heart out and left her a void, and when the train had passed, something within her cried, "Gone for ever!"

How anxiously she awaited his letters! They were always punctual and full of cheer. "Cheer up, ma, I'll soon be with you again," he wrote; or, "We are having a grand time; this is the life!"

But soon the tone of his letter changed. War did not seem to be so glorious after all. "How glad I'll be to get out of this hell," he told her, and, "When, oh, when will it end? I no longer want revenge." He once related how he had taken a German prisoner and he praised his captive up to the skies. "All the boys are tired of fighting," he cried. "We want peace!"

And at length he had got peace! There came a time when she received no more letters from him; she tried to think that he was negligent, but one day the news came he had fallen.

At first she could not believe it; it seemed incredible: her dear boy dead. Impossible! But then the truth dawned on her and she saw the ghostly scene as it had been pictured: a field of blood—and her boy lying torn into thousands of shreds in this red sea. Her hair became grey in a single night.

"The drums; the tinsel; the glitter!" she cried. She stood up. "Ever as a child he loved it, and that has killed him. . . . There is no God. I do no longer believe; there is only war and hell." She sat down again and turned the picture from her. She could not bear to look at it!

The shadows in the room grew darker. Night enveloped the chamber with her bleak mantle and swallowed up everything.

A perfect stillness! The next morning the mother was discovered, dead.

"Poor woman!" murmured the kindly neighbors.

NEWS OF THE MOVEMENT

Edmonton, Alta.—A comrade handed me a copy of your little paper, as I am very much interested in the movement. I am from the United States, but nevertheless we are all brothers. I thought I would do a little hustling for the Forward, for there is nothing we need more than a powerful Socialist press. Hoping that some more of your readers will do a little hustling for their own paper.

I am sending in six names for the Forward, and hope to send more in the future. W. H. DENNIS.

NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS.

This paper is published twice a month, and not weekly. As some of our subscribers are under the latter impression, we beg you to take notice that the Forward will be issued at the present rate until there is a change in prices of supplies.—Ed.

A great capitalist is nothing more than an individual who has become expert in taking rake-offs from labor.

A THING FOR COCKSURE PEOPLE TO REFLECT UPON.

"When the socialistic regime has regenerated the world, what will be its most marked manifestation?" said the Solid Citizen to my Socialistic friend.

"Well," responded my friend, "I don't know that there will be any very marked manifestation; there will be a harmonious blend. But one of the component parts of the 'blend' will be that no one will ever be compelled to be an accessory to his own robbery."

"Well, that is about the best yet. I suppose you'll have no trouble in making that plain."

"Maybe it will be a little difficult to make you understand, not having learned any of the rudiments of the theory, but I'll try. For instance, take that suit of clothes you are wearing. If it had not been for the tailor who made that suit you would not now be wearing that identical suit. Some other tailor might have made a suit resembling it, and it would not have been the suit that you have on. That suit that you have on is the result of the tailor's labor who made it. A suit made out of the same material, and in the same style, by some other tailor, would have been the result of that other tailor's labor. Do you get that?"

"Yes, but what has that got to do with the accessory part of it? I don't see the bearing."

"Of course you don't; maybe you never will; but I'm going to do my best to, try and make you see the connection. It is tailors who make suits, isn't it?"

"Why, of course."

"It is the total of all the suits that individual tailors make that constitutes the total of all the suits made, isn't it?"

"Sure!"

"So that no one can get away from the fact that the individual tailor, however obscure he may be, cuts a figure in the suit-making world?"

"I guess that is so—a small part."

"Without tailors there could not be any suits?"

"No; but that is absurd: we have 'em."

"Sometimes a negative proves a proposition. But we'll let that pass. But you are willing to concede that you would not now be wearing that identical suit if it had not been for the tailor who made it, are not you?"

"Yes."

"Now, do you suppose that that tailor got all that the boss charged you for just the making of it?"

"Why, of course not; he had to make a profit to keep in business."

"But why should he make that profit off the tailor, when that suit could not possibly have been, if it had not been for that identical tailor? Why should not the sole and only author of the suit's being have what it was worth to make it?"

"Well, ought not the boss to have any profit on the capital he has invested in the business?"

"But where could his capital have come from if it had not been for what he made off of tailors, and off what would have been valueless to him, without the tailor? Was not the tailor giving to him the only asset, or a part of the only asset he had, his labor, and making it possible for him to sell his material at a profit? And isn't the boss getting this for nothing? Isn't he getting something for nothing, just exactly what a robber gets when he pulls in the loot? Does not a robber get something for nothing?"

"Of course, a robber gets something for nothing."

"Now, as a result of getting the difference between what he pays the tailor for making his suit, and furnishing the material, the boss is getting something that he never in the world could have had if it had not been for the tailor, is he not?"

"Yes; but isn't a boss' time worth something?"

"Of course it is, but is it worth any more, or as much, as the fellows who make it possible for him to be worth anything?"

"Maybe it is; but how are you going to help it?"

"If all the tailors and all the bosses shared in the net profits—in profits it takes the labor of the tailor primarily to create, would not the tailors—the authors of the suits and the bosses being—have more and the bosses less?"

"Well, maybe they would."

"Well, that is what I meant when I said that one of the component parts of socialism's harmonious whole would be that no one would have to be an accessory to his own robbery. And when you come to think—think, I mean use—your God-given faculties of reasoning—is there anything criminal in any one's getting the full value of his labor?"

"Well, maybe not; but, as I said before, how are you going to make it any different?"

"That is not the question now to be so vitally interested in for people who think the present system is all right; the first and most necessary thing is to find out you are being robbed, and when enough of you find that out the remedy will be forthcoming."

TOM LOGIC.

CLIP AND COMMENT

Prophetic Insight.

A writer in the daily press presents this gratuitous information: The near approach of the British forces to the ancient City of Jerusalem, is an indication to God's chosen people that prophecy is being fulfilled. Britain is the lost tribe of Israel—Jacob will return to the city of his fathers and I will make of him a great nation as numberless as the sands in the desert whose children shall inhabit the four corners of the earth. The British Imperialists will be overjoyed at this delicious information, and will scarcely be able to sleep o' nights at the prospect of rich profits out of "Figs and Olives." No matter that the sacred precincts of the Temple be turned into a shambles or that Sampson-like, we beat the enemy with the "Jaw Bones of Asses."

A Novel Suggestion.

It has been suggested by a thriftless ink-spiller in order to increase production and present an exemplary character to the indolent that: Queen's Park, Toronto, should be turned into pasturage for sheep. The question has been asked as to whether the production thus entailed would be utilized for feeding the goats who at present are domiciled in the building popularly known as the House of Parliament. We are informed, however, by one who knows—that the decision of the "Parks Committee" not to allow the grass to be used for this purpose have a better purpose in view, viz: That in view of the high cost of living it may be advisable in the not distant future to turn the 2-legged sheep indiscriminately loose into this rich pasture and send the gardeners to dig trenches. This would be quite in harmony with the slogan, "Government by Superior Brains."

The Social Democratic Labor Party of Russia has voted against sending delegates to the proposed conference of socialists in the ten Allied countries, as proposed by the French. The Russians say the conference proposition is advanced by anti-Socialists to split the International, and they will not assist in keeping the movement divided.

The price of eggs in England has gone up to the eggs-traordinary figure of six-pence each. A glaring eggs-ample of the eggs-tortion and eggs-actions of English eggs-ploiters.